In the Name of Allah,
the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

قال الله تعالى:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴾

"Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification."

Sūrat al-Aḥzāb 33:33

Prophetic traditions mentioned in both in Sunnī and Shī'ah authoritative reference books of *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Qur'an) have confirmed that this holy verse was revealed to exclusively refer to the People of the Cloak [*ahl al-kisā'*], viz. Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn ('a) as the *Ahl al-Bayt* (People of the Household). For instance, refer to the following references: *Sunnī:* Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH), al-*Musnad*, 1:231; 4:107; 6:292, 304; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (d. 261 AH), 7:130; al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH), *Sunan*, 5:361 et al.; al-Dūlābī (d. 310 AH), al-*Dhuriyyah al-Ṭāhirah al-Nabawiyyah*, p. 108; al-Nasā'ī (d. 303 AH), al-*Sunan al-Kubrā'*, 5:108; 113; al-Ḥakīm al-Nayshābūrī (d. 405 AH), al-*Mustadrak 'ala' ṣ-Ṣahīḥāyn*, 2:416, 3:133, 146-147; al-Zarkashī (d. 794 AH), al-*Burhān*, p. 197; bin Hājar al-Asqalānī (d. 852 AH), *Fatḥ al-Barī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 7:104.

*Shī'ah: al-*Kulaynī (d. 328 AH), *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, 1:287; bin Babawayh (d. 329 AH), al-*Imāmah wa' t-Tabṣīrah*, p. 47, *ḥadīth* 29; al-Maghribī (d. 363 AH), *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, pp. 35, 37; al-Ṣādūq (d. 381 AH), al-*Khiṣāl*, pp. 403, 550; al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH), al-*Amalī*, *ḥadīth* 438, 482, 783.

For more details, refer to the exegesis of the holy verse recorded in the following books of *tafsīr*: al-Jassās (d. 370 AH), *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*; al-Wāḥidī (d. 468 AH), *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*; bin al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH), *Zād al-Masīr*; al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH), al-*Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*; bin Kathīr (d. 774 AH), *Tafsīr*; al-Tha'labī (d. 825 AH), *Tafsīr*; al-Ṭabarī (d. 875 AH), *Tafsīr*; al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH), al-*Durr al-Manthūr*; al-Shawkānī (d. 1250 AH), *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*; al-'Ayyāshī (d. 320 AH), *Tafsīr*; al-Qummī (d. 329 AH), *Tafsīr*; Furt al-Kūfī (d. 352 AH), *Tafsīr* at the margin of the exegesis of *Sūrat al-Nisā'* verse 59; al-Ṭabarsī (d. 560 AH), *Majma' al-Bayān*, as well as many other sources.

THIS IS SHI'ISM
(AN OBJECTIVE STUDY)

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله:

«إني تاركُ فيكُمُ الثَقلين: كتاب الله، وعترتي أهلَ بيتي، ما إن تمسكتُم بهما لن تضلوا أبداً وأنَّهُما لَن يَفترِقا حتّى يردا عَليَّ الحوضَ»

The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said:
"Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things [*Thaqalayn*]: The Book of Allah and my progeny [*'Itrah*], the members of my Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [*ḥawḍ*] (of *Kawthar*)."

Some references:

Al-Ḥākim an-Nayshābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak `alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut), vol. 3, pp. 109-110, 148, 533
Muslim, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (English translation), book 31, *ḥadīths* 5920-3
At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, pp. 621-2, *ḥadīths* 3786, 3788; vol. 2, p. 219.
An-Nassā'ī, *Khaṣā'iṣ 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, *ḥadīth* 79
Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26; vol. 3, pp. 26, 59; vol. 4, p. 371; vol. 5, pp. 181-182, 189-190
Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi` al-Uṣūl*, vol. 1, p. 277
Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa'n-Nihāyah*, vol. 5, p. 209
Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-`Aẓīm*, vol. 6, p. 199
Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Albanī, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth aṣ-ṣaḥīḥah* (Kuwait: Ad-Dar as-Salafiyyah), vol. 4, pp. 355-358.

THIS IS SHI'ISM
(AN OBJECTIVE STUDY)

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سرشناسه: قرشی، باقر شریف، ۱۹۲۶ – Qarashi, Baqir Sharif
عنوان قراردادی: هذه هی الشیعه. انگلیسی.
This is Shi'ism (An objective Study) \ by Baqir Sharif al-Qarashi; supervisor: Translation Unit, caltural Affairs Department, Ahl al-Bayt (ʻa) World Assembly (ABWA): Translator: Umar Kumu; Editor: Effat Shah. – Qom: Ahl al-Bayt(ʻa) World Assembly (ABWA) Publishing and Printing Center, 2014
مشخصات ظاهری: ۱۵۳ ص.
شابک: ۹۷۸-۹۶۴-۵۲۹-۸۱۵-۷
یادداشت: زبان انگلیسی
موضوع: شیعیان – تاریخ
موضوع: شیعه – عقاید
شناسه افزوده: کومو، عمر؛ مترجم
شناسه افزوده: عفت شاه، – ، ویراستار
شناسه افزوده: مجمع جهانی اهل بیت (ع)
شناسه افزوده: اداره ترجمه مجمع جهانی اهل بیت علیهم السلام
شناسه افزوده: هذه هی الشیعه. انگلیسی
رده بندی کنگره: ۱۳۹۳ ۴۰۴۹۵۲ هـ ۴ق / ۲۱۱/۵ BP
رده بندی دیویی: ۲۹۷ / ۴۱۷۲

THIS IS SHI'ISM
(AN OBJECTIVE STUDY)

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Project supervisor: Translation Unit, Cultural Affairs Department, Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly (ABWA)
Translator: ʻUmar Kumu
Editor: Iffat Shah
Proofreader: Sayyid Baqir Husayni
Layout: Fateme Golzar
Publisher: ABWA Publishing and Printing Center
First Printing: 2014
Printed by: Khatam Al-Anbia
Copies: 1000
ISBN: 978-964-529-815-7
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Alley No. 6, Jumhuri Blvd., Qum, Iran Tel: 0098-25-32131221
No. 228, Keshavarz Blvd., Tehran, Iran, Tel: 0098-21-88970171
www.ahl-ul-bayt.org *www.abwacd.com*
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PREFACE

The invaluable legacy of the Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has provided the Muslim ummah with many scholars whom, following in the footsteps of Imāms of the Prophet's Household ('a), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defense of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shī'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in editing and publishing valuable works by leading Shī'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household ('a) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muḥammad (s).

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imām al-Mahdī, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to Ayatollah Baqir Sharif al-Qarashi the author of the present book, and ‘Umar Kumu, its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation Office.

Cultural Affairs Department
The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly

DEDICATION

I dedicate this humble work to him whose death has been felt by knowledge and piety, to him under the shelter of whose love and affection I have lived: that is, my brother, Hujjat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen *Shaykh Hadi Sharif al-Qarashi*.

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

"Whoever takes for his guardians Allah, His Apostle and the faithful [should know that] the confederates of Allah are indeed the victorious." [1]

"Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord, and do not follow any masters besides Him." [2]

"O you who have faith! Beware of Allah, and be with the Truthful." [3]

1- *Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:56.*
2- *Surah al-A'raf, 7:3.*
3- *Surah al- Tawbah, 9:119.*

INTRODUCTION

1- In this book I will discuss Shi'ism as objectively as possible, without bowing to sentiment, desire or any other factors, caused by received beliefs or the influence of one's milieu. I will record faithfully the religious and political precepts, whether doctrinal or otherwise, which this denomination believes in and upholds. This I will do by relying on what is mentioned in Shi'ah sources and in such other sources as are considered the yardstick for any successful study on questions of thought and reform.

2- A study of the doctrines of any religious denomination should be impartial and free from the influence of sectarian tendencies and interdenominational hatred. It is only natural that where it is not impartial a research project would fall short of objectivity and turn out a failure. A number of authors have written about Shi'ism but, unfortunately, most of their works have neither been realistic nor untainted, especially by slanders and interpolations. They have, either intentionally or out of ignorance, attributed to the Shi'ah, mean accusations and calumnies that are totally baseless.

3- With all its different modes and types, whether in the religious, political or educational spheres, Shi'ah thought emanates from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the Prophet's Household (‘a) and is derived from their teachings, and, undoubtedly, the eminent Imams (‘a) were committed to the letter of the law he brought. Therefore, their narrations are, being the closest people to the Prophet (s), the most pertaining to the issues of divine law and religious rules, are part and parcel of Islam, and indeed, the highest representation of it; they are in no way alien to it.

4- The Shi'ah have, as their leaders, the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)* who are, by consensus of the Muslims, the leaders of the pious and the reformers. Their way of life was full of light and the lofty values and ideals which mankind holds dear; they remain unparalleled in

excellence and position. The first one among them was the head of the pure progeny, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) and the gate of the Prophet's city of knowledge, and their last one is the Mahdi of Muhammad's family (‘a), and may God hasten his reappearance. They are all the ships of deliverance, the source of peace and felicity and the torch of guidance for the Muslim *ummah*. God, the Exalted, has made love for the Imams (‘a) obligatory and conjoined them with the great Prophet (s), as stated in the holy Qur'an. God, the Exalted, has designated them the gate of repentance, through which whoever enters, is secured and from which whoever stays away, falls into God's anger and punishment. We shall in due course talk about the Imams' (‘a) high stations.

5- There is no question of exceeding proper bounds (*ghulu*) in the Shi'ites' allegiance and expression of love for their Imams (‘a), as their opponents accuse them. In fact their loyalty is a balanced one because the Shi'ah believe that the Imams (‘a) are 'honored servants of God who do not precede Him in speech but act on His commands'. God has endowed them with wisdom and conclusive speech, and protected them from sedition and heresies, into which the ignorant fall. This fact is exhibited by the way of life of the pure Imams (‘a) and their brilliant conduct which included dedicating themselves to God; penitence; asceticism and adorning themselves with noble ethics, fine traits and other honorable inclinations that impel the people with love and loyalty for them. This love and loyalty are in fact love for honour and loyalty to the truth.

6- The foremost manifestation of the Shi'ites' love and loyalty to the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) is the fact that they receive their religious rules from them and act upon the precepts that came from them concerning the divine law, and none of the Muslim scholars considers the actions that are based on the Imams' (‘a) rulings as invalid, insufficient, and requiring a repetition. It is quite natural that this manifestation never exceeds the proper bounds of religion (*ghulu*).

Another aspect of the Shi'ites' loyalty to their Imams (‘a) is the mourning ceremonies they conduct in commemoration of the injustice and oppression the Imams (‘a) suffered at the hands of the wicked rulers of their time, who had unleashed on them their rage and caused them untold tribulations. Recounting those events to the society will

surely benefit it because it would remind the people of the evils that befell those pure souls for their efforts to deliver mankind from oppression and liberate them from humiliation and servitude. Another benefit to be reaped from the commemorations of such events is the exhortations that the honorable speakers give on such occasions by inviting people towards God, enjoining them to do good acts and warning them against committing sins. In fact these occasions constitute schools for refining the morals and helping the development of ideas in the people.

7- Shi'ism is the first denomination to rebel against injustice and tyranny, advocate the issues which affect the destiny of the Muslim peoples, defend the rights of the wronged and the oppressed, and declare armed revolt against many despots and leaders of deviation. At the forefront of the Shi'ites was the father of the freemen and lord of the martyrs Imam al-Husayn (‘a). He revolted against the despot of his time Yazid bin Mu'awiya who openly declared his unbelief and heresy, denied the Muslims their rights and treated God's funds as his personal possessions. Thus, the great Imam (‘a) raised the banner of revolution and got martyred for the sake of regaining for the people their liberty and honour.

Before al-Husayn's (‘a) uprising a group of outstanding Shi'ites had revolted against Mu'awaya's rule. Among them was the eminent companion Hijr bin 'Adiy who rose up together with his celebrated friends in order to restore the people's honour which had been trampled upon by the ruling gang of the Umayyads who did everything to humiliate the Muslims and act against their wish. The history of Shi'ism is full of vehement uprisings whose purpose was to save Muslims from despotism and to help develop their political and economic life.

8- During the Umayyad and Abbasid periods the Shi'ah suffered most severely the most terrible forms of affliction: their eyes were plucked out, they were crucified on the trunks of palm trees, their houses were demolished, their testimonies were rejects in courts of law and the least political and economic rights were denied them. Inspite of all that, they remained steadfast and kept aloft the banner of love and loyalty to the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a).

Umayyad and Abbasid rulers employed all forms of terrorism to maltreat and confront the Shi'ah. The cause of this situation was the

principles the Shi'ah advocated and whose motto they proclaimed; they did not consider the governments of those times legitimate or emanating from the people's choice. In addition, most of those kings did not possess those noble and lofty traits that are expected in Muslim rulers; traits such as probity and piety, a good knowledge of the social and economic needs of the *ummah*, being learned in religious sciences, caution in dealing with the funds of the Muslims, and promoting the questions that pertain to their destiny. There is no doubt that those kings could not boast of these things, and therefore, the Shi'ah did not consider their rule legitimate. This is why they faced the anger and vengeance of the rulers.

9- It is stressed in sociology that any idea whose advocates are confronted with the harshness and tyranny of those in power does not live long; it does not continue for more than a century. The Shi'ah have been tyrannized and oppressed and they endured the bitterest forms of misery through most periods of history but despite all that, Shi'ism spread, and won friends and followers who embraced its principles. The reason behind this is the originality of its principles, the progressive nature of its ideas and the fact that Shi'ism is always in agreement with human innate disposition and the norms of nature. There is nothing in the principles and practical laws of Shi'ism which contradicts the laid down rules in God's law; they go hand in hand with Islam's general plans and laws.

10- One distinguishing feature of Shi'ism that makes it stand out from other Islamic denominations is originality and progress, one manifestation being keeping the door of *ijtihad* [i.e. the exercise of applying expert judgment in religious law by the competent jurist] open. This has been closed with respect to other Islamic sects. This feature [i.e. keeping the door of *ijtihad* open] is a pressing need that is indispensable, especially in this age of scientific progress, in which many hitherto unknown issues have arisen. Today we are faced with the questions of organ transplant in humans, traveling to the moon [and other forms of space travel], banking transactions, what the owner of an estate receives by way of etc. With the door of *ijtihad* open these new issues can be solved in the light of practical principles (*usul al-amaliyyah*) which the Shi'ah jurists consider among the principles from which religious laws can be derived. Another sign of the originality of Imamiyyah Shi'ah jurisprudence, is that it has allowed the intellect

some scope in deriving laws concerning which there is no legal text or such a text is of general nature or where it appears to be contradicted by another. Here the jurist takes recourse to the *usul al-amaliyyah* that have been stipulated for use in case of doubt as to the practical law which is applicable in a given situation. These principles have been discussed in the Shi'ah works on *usul al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) and also recorded in their *rasa'il al-amaliyyah* (books on practical laws) which the jurists write for the use of their followers.

11- It is worth mentioning that the narrations which have been related from the Imams of guidance (‘a) and recorded in the books of *hadith* are subjected to study by the Imamiyyah jurists. Some are sound (*al-sahih*), others good (*al-hasan*), others weak (*al-da'if*) and others fabricated (*al-maudu*), and, therefore the Shi'ah should not be blamed, with respect to their doctrines, for what a fabricated narration contains, just as other Islamic sects should not be censured for a similar thing. Imamiyyah jurists examine the chain of transmission (*sanad*) of the narrations based on the works of reliable scholars of 'declaration of unreliability' and 'declaration of veracity' (*al-jarh wa* al-*ta'dil*) of narrators, such as al-Najashi, al-Kashshi and al-Tusi. If the *sanad* of a narration is sound and nothing contradicts it and its import is not alien to the holy Qur'an and the Sunna (tradition of the Prophet) a jurist may give his legal opinion based on it.

Our late eminent master, Imam al-Khu'i (may God illuminate his tomb) has treated the biographies of narrators in an objective and comprehensive manner. This he did in his encyclopeadic work *Mu'jam Rijal al-Hadith* where he mentioned the reliable narrators, the weak ones and the fabricators.

12- This book will not treat the religious rituals of the Immaiyyah Shi'ah such as prayers, fasting, *zakat*, pilgrimage and other rules on contracts and unilateral pronouncements (*iqa'at*). The great jurists have recorded them in their books on practical laws of Islam (*rasa'il al-amaliyyah*) which have been distributed all over the land.

Among the merits of Imamiyyah jurisprudence is that it is derived from a single source which is the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a). As such, with respect to many issues no difference of opinion between the jurists is observed. The differences found in the few other questions arise from the way each jurist understsands the outward meanings (*zahir*) of the

narrations or the way he applies the *usul al-amaliyyah* where there is no text to derive a law from. As for the other Islamic schools, there are widespread differences in most issues as is evident in their jurisprudential works.

13- Before I close this preface I would like to mention with much grief a catastrophe which has befallen me and tied my hands. How I wish it had dispatched me at once! This is the death of my brother and companion under whose care I have lived, Hujjat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen Shaykh Hadi Sharif al-Qarashi (may God illluminate his tomb). I have lost my educator and mentor and thereby lost all my hope in life.

I wanted to present this humble effort to him so that he may give his reliable opinion but, alas! I have been taken unawares by his demise. Indeed I have lost him and so did the theological school. Indeed we belong to God and to Him shall we return! I beseech the Most High God to reward him for his kindness and compassion with the best of rewards, and give me the power to bear this profound loss.

Holy city of Najaf,
28th Rajab, 1415 A.H.
The Author Baqir Sharif al-Qarashi

THE ORIGIN OF SHI'ISM

Shi'ism appeared on the political and religious scene at the dawn of Islamic of history. It raised the banner of love and loyalty to the Prophetic Household (‘a), advocated their goals and entertained a firm belief that they were more deserving of the position of the Prophet (s) after him. Likewise, Shi'ism holds that the head of the pure progeny, Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), was the testamentary legatee (*wasiy*) of the Apostle, the door of his city of knowledge and the custodian of his wisdom, and that the pure Imams after him were the testamentary legatees of the Apostle (s), the leaders of his *ummah,* and the bearers of his mission. This denomination played a crucial part in the political and social events of the Muslim *ummah*. Its members have opposed the unjust, swept away the thrones of the despots and hoisted the banner of social justice. In this chapter, we shall look at the origin of this sect.

The Origin of Shi'ism

A number of views have been propounded with regard to how and when Shi'ism started. Some of them are:

During the Prophet's Lifetime

It is an established fact that Shi'ism originated during the lifetime of the Apostle (s) and that he was the one who planted its seed and nurtured it throughout the stages of his life. This view is supported by the narrations that are related from the prophet (s) which gave the followers of Imam Ali (‘a) the mark of Shi'ism, commended them and gave them the news that the highest abodes of paradise were awaiting them. Here are some of these narrations:

The Apostle of God (s) said:

1- "O Ali! You and your partisans (Shi'ah) will come up to me at the Pond".[1]

2- "O Ali! You will meet God while your partisans (Shi'ah) are pleased with [by God], and your enemies will meet Him while they are in a state of anger and with their heads raised up."[2]

3- "Ali and his partisans (Shi'ah) are the successful ones on the Day of Resurrection.[3]

4- "The partisans (Shi'ah) of Ali are the successful."[4]

5- "O Ali! God has indeed forgiven you, your progeny, your family, your partisans (Shi'ah) and those who love your partisans. You are indeed the one removed from idolatry (*al-'anza'*) and the wise one [full of knowledge] (*al-batin*).[5]

6- Suyuti relates the following narration: "Ibn Asakir relates on the authority of Jabir bin Abdillah who said: We were in the company of the Prophet (s) when Ali (‘a) approached. The Prophet said: "I swear by Him in whose hand is my life that this [man] and his partisans (shi'ah) are surely the successful ones on the Day of Resurrection.' Then this verse was revealed: 'Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds – it is they who are the best of creatures (98:7). [Thereafter] whenever Ali (‘a) approached, the Companions of the Prophet (s) said: "The best of creatures has come."[6]

7- Bin Mardawayh relates that Ali (‘a) said: The Apostle of God (s) has said to me, 'Did you not hear the saying of God the Exalted: Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds – it is they who are the best of creatures? [They are] you and your partisans. The appointed place where we shall meet you is the Pond and when the nations arrive for the reckoning you will be called the bright-faced ones."[7]

1- Majma' al-Zawa'id, 9: 131; Kunuz al-Haqa'iq, 188; al-Isti‘ab, 2: 457.
2- Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, 43; Majma' al-Zawa'id, 9: 131.
3- Kunuz al-Haqa'iq, 92.
4- Ibid. 82.
5- Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, 96.
6- Al-Durr al-Manthur: [commentary on Surat al-Bayyinah].
7- Ibid.

Many similar narrations have been related in the books of hadith. They are explicit on the fact that the Prophet (s) was the one who instituted Shi'ism, described the followers of Imam Ali (‘a) with glowing terms and also gave them the news of the high positions that await them in paradise.

Scholars supporting this view

A group of eminent scholars both earlier and later ones hold that Shi'ism appeared during the time of the Great Prophet (s). Here are some of their comments in this regard:

1. Al-Shaykh al-Saduq

The 'Trusted One' of Islam (*Thiqat al-Islam*) al-Shaykh al-Saduq (may God illuminate his tomb) has stated that partisanship (*al-tashayyu'*) to the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) started during the days of the Apostle of God (s) and that he had given them the news of attaining paradise.[1]

2. Sa'd al-Qummi

Sa'd al-Qummi stresses that the first among the Islamic sects to appear is the Shi'ah and it is the party of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a). His adherents were known for their devotion to him and believing in his being the Imam.[2] Al-Qummi also states that the first group of the Companions of the Prophet where Shi'ites. They included the combatant Ammar bin Yasir, the revolutionary Abu Dhar al-Ghifari, the Prophet's adviser Salman al-Farisi and al-Miqdad bin al-Aswad, and they were the first people to be called Shi'ah in Islam.[3]

Al-Razi also declares that this band of Muslims used to be called the partisans and helpers of Ali (‘a), and that the Prophet (s) has said concerning them: 'Paradise longs for four people: Salman, Abu Dhar, Miqdad and Ammar.'[4] Al-Shaykh al-Mufid calls these four parsonages the pillars[5] i.e. the pillars of Islam.

1- Sifat al-Shi'ah; Fada'il al-Shi'ah.
2- Al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq, 15.
3- Firaq al-Shi'ah, 15.
4- Al-Zinah Waraqah, 205.
5- Al-Zinah Waraqah, 205; al-Ikhtisas, 6.

3. Imam Kashif al-Ghita'

Imam Muhammad Husayn Kashif al-Ghita' (may God have mercy on him) has said: The first person to plant the seed of Shi'ism in Islam is the bearer of the divine law himself and this means that the seed of Shi'ism was planted together with the seed of Islam.[1]

4. Allamah Muzaffar

Allamah Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar writes: The call to Shi'ism started the very day the great deliverer Muhammad (s) proclaimed: There is no deity except Allah. When the saying of God, *"Warn your near relatives"* (*Quran 26: 214*) was revealed to him, the Prophet (s) assembled the Hashimite clan and warned them and then said: 'Who among you will support me and become my brother, heir, testamentary legatee and successor after me?' But no one responded to his request except al-Murtada (Ali) ‘a. Then the Apostle said to them: 'This is my brother, minister, testamentary legatee (*wasiy*) and successor among you after me. Listen to him and obey him."

Thus the Prophet's (s) invitation to partisanship to Ali and to the profession of Islam came together, and it was in that sense that Abu Dhar became one of the partisans of Ali (‘a).

Al-Shaykh al-Muzaffar quotes Muhammad Kurd Ali, the author of *Khutat al-Sham*, as saying: 'A group of eminent companions are known for their loyalty to Ali during the time of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family. They include Salman al-Farisi who said: 'We pledged allegiance to God's Apostle (s) that we would be sincere to the Muslims and follow Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) and be loyal to him.' Another was Abu Sa'id al-Khudri who said: 'The people have been commanded to perform five things of which they did four and left out one.' When he was asked what the four things were, al-Khudri replied: 'Prayer, *zakat,* fasting during the month of Ramadan and pilgrimage.' On being asked what the other one which they left out was, he said: 'Loyalty to Ali bin Abi Talib."[2]

1- Asl al-shi'at wa Usuliha.
2- Hayat al-Imam al-Sadiq, 7:181.

The meaning of what Shaykh al-Muzaffar said is that Shi'ism is loyalty to Imam Ali (‘a), affirming his universal authority after the Prophet (s) and holding that he was most deserving of the Prophet's seat.

Another group of scholars also support the idea that Shi'ism and loyalty to Abu al-Hasan Ali (‘a) originated during the time of the Apostle (s). They believe that he was the one who appointed Imam Ali (‘a) as his successor and universal authority for the Muslim community. We shall expatiate on that later.

Other views

Some writers are of the view that Shi'ism did not start during the time of the Prophet (s) but after him. Below are the names of some of them and their opinions.

1. Bin Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun holds that Shi'ism appeared at the time of the Electoral Council (*al-Shura'*) and that there was a group of the Companions such as al-Zubayr, Ammar bin Yasir and al-Miqdad bin al-Aswad who had been Ali's partisans and who believed that he was more entitled to the caliphate. When someone else was made the caliph they became displeased and sad, but as they were firm in religion and desired that harmony should prevail, these people only brooded over their displeasure and grief.[1]

However, this view is not plausible because Shi'ism started during the days of the Apostle of God (s) and became very conspicuous. Its leaders confronted Abu Bakr with very cogent arguments which are considered political documents in support of the Shi'ite belief that Imam Ali (‘a) was the rightful caliph. We shall cite those arguments in due course.

2. Bin Hazm

Ibn Hazm held the view that Shi'ism appeared after the assassination of Uthman. He says: Then Uthman ruled for twelve years and died. With his death the Rawafid affair started.[2]

1- Al-'Ibar.
2- Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Nihal, 2:80.

3. Uthman bin Abdillah al-Hanafi

Uthman bin Abdillah al-Hanafi supports bin Hazm's opinion, saying: During the time of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman there was no Shi‘ism in the Muslim community but after the assassination of Uthman the Rawafids emerged.[1]

What bin Hazm and al-Hanafi held is not supported by proofs which show, to the contrary, that Shi'ism originated during the time of the Apostle of God (s) and it was the formation of a shi'ite government that took place after uthman's assassination. That was achieved when Imam Ali (‘a) took the reigns of the caliphate. He introduced justice and equity in ways unseen before, as a result of which shi'ism and loyalty to the *ahl al-bayt (‘a)* spread to all regions of the Islamic commonwealth.

4. Bin al-Nadim

Ibn al-Nadim reports that Shi'ism came into being when Talhah and al-Zubayr opposed Ali and could not accept anything less than revenge for Uthman bin Affan's blood, at which point Ali fought them and put down their rebellion.Thereafter, those who followed Ali were called the Shi'iah and Ali himself used to address them as 'my partisans' (*shi'ati*). He also called them the class of bosom friends (*asfiya'*), the class of partisans, the class of the picked division and the class of the companions.[2]

Surely, the origin of Shi'ism was during the time of the Apostle of God (s) and the rebellion of Talha, al-Zubayr and A'ishah against Ali's rule had no bearing at all on its appearance.

5. Taha Husayn

Dr. Taha Husayn says: Shi'ism did not exist during the time of Ali; rather it came into being a short time after his death.with this precise meaning accorded to Shi'ism by the jurists, theologians and historians of Islamic sects, During the time of Ali, the word Shi'ah denoted its ancient meaning as expressed in the holy Qur'an in the saying of God, the Mighty and Sublime in *Surah al-Qasas*:

1- Al-Firaq al-Muftariqah bayn Ahl al-Dhaygh wa al-Zandaqah, 6.
2- Al-Fahrast, 175.

﴿وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَى حِينِ غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ هَذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَاسْتَغَاثَهُ الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَوَكَزَهُ مُوسَى فَقَضَى عَلَيْهِ﴾

"[One day] he entered the city at a time when its people dwelt in distraction. He found there two men fighting, this one from his followers (shi'atih) and that one from his enemies. The one who was from his followers sought his help against him who was from his enemies. So Moses hit him with his fist, where upon he expired."[1]

And the saying of God, the Mighty and Sublime in *Surah al-Saffat*:

﴿وَإِنَّ مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ لَإِبْرَاهِيمَ﴾

"Indeed Abraham was among his followers."[2]

The word Shi'ah in these two and other verses denotes a group of followers and helpers who shared a common view and method. Thus the man who was the Shi'i of Moses was in fact from the children of Israel while the man who was from Moses' enemies was from the Egyptians.

Based on this, the earlier exegetes who had learned the commentary of the Qur'an from the learned Companions of the Prophet (s) said that 'Abraham was among the followers (Shi'ah) of Noah i.e. he followed Noah's tradition and method, held the same view and subscripted to the same religion as him.' Those exegetes added: 'Therefore, the Shi'ah of Ali during his caliphate were his companions who had pledged allegiance to him and followed his opinion, both the people among them who fought on his side and those who did not.' Thus the term Shi'ah in those days was not solely applied to Ali's companions; Mu'awiyah also had his shi'ah who were his Syrian and other followers.

Then Taha Husayn adds: Therefore, in Ali's day the term *shi'ah* did not carry the connotation given to it by the jurists and theologians; like other words, it denoted its proximate meaning by which it is applied with respect to the supporters of either side of a contention. I am not

1- *Surah al-Qasas, 28:15.*
2- *Surah al-Saffat, 37:83.*

aware of any ancient text in which the word *shi'ah* has been subjoined to [the name of] Ali prior to the civil war, so Ali did not have at that time, a distinct group of followers who were distinguishable from the rest of the community.'

And he adds: 'This means that Ali (‘a) neither had a distinct following before the civil war nor a group of followers (Shi'ah) during his rule the way the term is applied by the jurists and theologians.'[1]

A number of objections can be directed at Dr. Taha Husayn's thesis.

Firstly, his assertion that the term *shi'ah* in its precise connotation as understood by the jurists, theologians and historians of Islamic sects did not exist during the lifetime of Ali (‘a) and that it appeared after him by a short period of time' is surely contestable because Shi'ism, with this same connotation, appeared during the time of the Apostle (s). The best and most distinguished companions believed in the Imamate of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), not to speak of the narrations from the Prophet (s) which celebrate the merits and honourable heavenly stations of Imam Ali's (‘a) partisans.

Secondly, Dr. Husayn said that he was not aware of any ancient text of a date prior to the civil war in which the word *shi'ah* is associated with Ali (‘a). But the narrations from the Prophet (s) which we have mentioned above attribute Shi'ism to the followers of the Imam (‘a) and also describe them in respectable qualities. Perhaps his eminence did not search the *hadith* sources to find such narrations.

Thirdly, he mentions that the Imam (‘a) did not have any distinct partisans before or after the civil war, or during his rule. This is also contestable for the Imam (‘a) indeed had distinguishable partisans and they were eminent personages of Islam and well known Companions such as Ammar bin Yasir, Abu Dharr, Hijr bin Adiy, Maytham al-Tammar and Rashid al-Hajari. Sayyid Mohsin al-Amili mentions in his encyclopeadic work *A'yan al-Shi'ah*, that the majority of the Companions who lived to see the battle of Siffin sided with Imam Ali (‘a). 87 Ansar (*Ansar* i.e. the Companions who received and helped the Prophet (s)) and the *Muhajirun* (the Companions who migrated to Medina) and 900 of those who had witnessed the pledge of allegiance

1- Taha Husayn's al-Fitnat al-Kubra, 2:601-603.

to the Prophet (s) known as *bay'at al-ridwan*, and altogether, 2800 Companions were in his army at Siffin. Indeed, the Imam (‘a) had distinct partisans who were known for their loyalty to him.

6. Bernard Lewis

The orientalist scholar Bernard Lewis holds that Shi'ism started after the death of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) and the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (‘a); they had had their influence on the rise of revolutionary Shi'ism with a millenarian (Mahdist) nature. However, this viewpoint is not reliable because, as we have indicated above, Shi'ism appeared during the life-time of the Prophet (s) Its spread took place when the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) became the caliph, when the people saw his justice, his self-denial, his policy which was based on the general good of the people and his complete knowledge of all types of learning and sciences. Indeed, he led a brilliant school that contained whatever was necessary for mankind to attain nobleness. Thus, the majority of Muslims believed that Imam Ali (‘a) inherited the learning and perfection of the prophets. In a speech, the renowned leader Malik al-Ashtar says: 'O you people! This man – i.e., Imam Ali (‘a) – is the testamentary legatee of the testamentary legatees, the inheritor of prophets' knowledge.'[1]

Another important factor that was responsible for the spread of Shi'ism among Muslims is the martyrdom Imam al-Husayn, the beloved grandson of the Prophet (s) who revolted against the despot of his time, Yazid bin Mu'awiya. He did that in order to establish a Qur'anic government that would usher in Islamic justice; he would distribute God's treasures among the poor and the destitute and stamp out all forms of decadence and backwardness from the Arab and Islamic world. It was for the sake of these noble principles that al-Husayn (‘a) was martyred in a most dreadful way. History has never seen an incident as merciless and aborrninable as that; global conscience was shocked by its horror and in its wake many people eagerly embraced Shi'ism and accepted the principles of the *Ahl a-Bayt* (‘a).

1. Tarikh al-Yaqubi, 2:151.

In the coming topics, we shall mention some facts which support our viewpoint with regard to when Shi'ism originated, i.e. during the lifetime of the great Prophet (s).

LEADERSHIP
AN ISLAMIC NECESSITY

In Islam the issue of leadership is considered among the basic constituents of society and an indispensable necessity for an Islamic life. Through it, any deviation in the worldly or religious systems is set aright, and likewise, the comprehensive justice that God intends to establish on earth is attained. Therefore, we should discuss, at least briefly, the issues that pertain to leadership because of its close relationship with the discussion about Shi'ism.

Definition

In religious terminology, leadership (*al-khilafah*) refers to the universal leadership in both worldly and religious matters that deputizes for the great prophet (s). Defining it, bin Khaldun says: al-*khilafah* makes the whole ummah act according to the divine law in their otherworldly interests and in those worldly interests in which the former predominates, because, for the law-giver, all worldly matters are considered with respect to the interests of the hereafter. Thus, in reality, al-*khilafah* is the leadership of the bearer of divine law, which preserves the religion and administers [the affairs of] the world.'[1]

Al-Mawardi says: It (*al-Khilafah*) is the succession to prophethood to defend the religion and administer world[ly affairs].'[2]

Consensus on the fact that it is obligatory

All Muslims agree on the necessity of leadership and the obligation of establishing it.

Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi writes: All the Sunnis, the Murji'ites, the Shi'ites and the Kharijites are unanimous on the necessity of leadership (*imamah*) and that it is obligatory for the Muslim community to obey

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1- Bin Khaldun's al-Muqaddimah, 166.
2- Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah.

a just ruler who upholds God's rule and administers their affairs according to the divine law brought by the Prophet (s). The only exception are the Najadi Khajirites, who held that to establish a leadership is not obligatory; the people were only required to pursue the truth among themselves. I do not think that a single person from that sect now remains. The Najadites were followers of Najdah bin Umayr al-Hanafi. The opinion of this sect is unacceptable and the fact that all the groups we have mentioned agree on its falsity is enough to invalidate it, not to speak of the Qur'an and the Sunna (Tradition of the Prophet) which consider it necessary to have a leader. God the Exalted says: *"Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you."*(*Qur'an, 4:59*).'[1]

The Need for Leadership

It is an indispensable necessity to have a leader and this issue affects the life of the Muslims as a whole; they need a ruler who will run their affairs and implement the law of God and the Sunna of His Apostle. Islamic law comprises a number of rules and principles, such as the penal code, enjoining the good and forbidding the bad, striving in the way of God (*jihad*), fighting poverty and misery, the dissemination of learning and morals, and such other laws that cannot be upheld by individuals without a governing authority which would see to their execution.

Ibn Taymiyya writes: 'Assumption of authority over people's affairs is among the greatest religious obligations. Indeed, religion cannot be established without that, because God has decreed the obligation of commanding the good and forbidding the bad, assisting the oppressed, *jihad*, upholding justice and carrying out the divinely prescribed punishments (*hudud*), all of which cannot be done except through force and authority.'[2]

Another writer says: 'Leadership (*al-khilafah*) is an everlasting tree of firm roots which derives its power of growth from history and its network of branches are spread in the heart of every Muslim. It is a tree that neither dies nor withers. Every Muslim, whether he lives in the

1- Al-Milal wa al-Ahwa', 4:87.
2- Al-Siyasat al-Shar'iyyah, 172-173.

cold unknown Siberia or on the burning waters of Lake Chad, likes to see his Prophet (s) represented in the caliph. For Muslims, the caliph is dear to all and the caliphate is the pivot of Islam, around which they all revolve, and the point of attraction towards which they are drawn.'[1]

In any case, the caliphate (leadership) is one of the fundamental elements that constitute Islamic society and the power that can protect the Muslims from external aggression. It is the force that protects their honour, liberty and independence and wards off the danger of the infidel powers that menace them day and night.

The Prophet and the Caliphate

The noble Prophet (s) has laid special emphasis on the issue of succession, or leadership after him, because it was the most sensitive office in the Islamic state, being a continuation of his rule and a perpetuation of his law. He had coupled it with his radiant call to monotheism when he invited his family to believe him and have faith in his message so that he might take, from among them, someone who would support him in conveying his message, and that he might appoint such a person as his minister and successor. None of them responded to the Prophet except Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), so he held his neck and addressed the people saying: This is my brother, minister and successor after me, so listen to him and obey him.'[2]

Because of the much importance he attached to the issue of leadership, the Prophet (s) said: 'He who dies without knowing the Imam (divinely appointed leader) of his time dies the death of *jahiliyyah*.'

The Prophet (s) addressed all the issues of the Muslims and supplied decisive solutions, the most important of which was the appointment of a successor who would establish Islamic justice among the people and judge between them according to the divine law. The flimsiest viewpoint and the furthest away from the truth is the one which says that the holy Prophet (s) neglected this matter. To neglect this important question would have been tantamount to destroying the social edifice which Islam had erected and throw the Muslim community into the abyss of uncertainty.

1- Ittihad al-Muslimin, 257.
2- The soundess of this hadith is agreed upon.

The deep crises and severe controversies which beset the Islamic nation throughout most of its history, and in which hundreds of thousands were lost, had doubtlessly arisen from the deliberate negligence of the Prophetic traditions which defined who should be caliph. He limited it those members of his family who were God's missionaries on earth. This brought about a desperate struggle for power.

Sayyid Muhammad Sayyid al-Gilani says: 'They contested for the caliphate with a desperateness hardly seen among other nations; thereby committed atrocities we would be ashamed of committing today. As a result of that cities and villages were destroyed, houses were burnt down, women widowed, children orphaned and a great number of Muslims perished.'[1]

In any case, how could the Prophet (s), who had been sent as mercy to the worlds and, who was pained by the distress and misery that might befall his community, leave it in chaos after him, and not appoint a leader who would steer it along its course?

The Prophet (s) appointed Ali (‘a)

The issue of succession in Islam is not a matter of conferment of titles or something to be subjected to sentiments; it is one of the most sensitive positions in Islamic society on which rests all the issues that pertain to its destiny.

Scholarly studies and serious thought on the Prophet's biography and other historical sources will confirm that the Prophet (s) had indeed nominated Ali, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) as his successor. This position is supported by successively transmitted *hadiths* that show how the Prophet used to extol and commend him as the gate of his city of knowledge, that he was with the truth and the truth was with him and that he was to him what Aaron was to Moses. This exalted station of Ali (‘a) is also clearly expressed in the gathering of al-Ghadir in which the Prophet (s) received pledges of allegiance for Ali (‘a) from the Muslims as their prince and leader. The Mothers of the Believers (i.e. the Prophet's wives) had also pledged their allegiance as did the rest of the Muslims. Umar bin al-Khattab shook hands with Ali and congratulated him in these words: 'Congratulations! Oh son of Abu

1- Athar al-Tashayyu' fi al-Adab al-Arabi, 15.

Talib! You have become my master and the master of every Muslim, man and woman.'[1]

The oath of allegiance that was pledged to the Commander of the Faithful on the gathering of al-Ghadir is part of the Islamic message and one of its elements; whoever denies it is not rightly-guided.

Why did the Prophet (s) nominate Ali (‘a)?

Many people pose the question: Why did the Prophet (s) nominate Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) as his successor? The answer is: The Prophet (s) scrutinized his companions and his family and did not find anyone among them who deserved that sensitive post except the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), who was the nearest person to the Apostle of God (s) and the one who best understood the aims of his message, so he appointed him his successor. God forbid that the Prophet (s) should succumb to sentiments in this issue, for the position of prophethood is too sublime to make room for sentiments and matters completely worldly. Indeed, the Prophet (s) selected Imam Ali (‘a) as the leader and successor to govern the entire community after him because of the unique capabilities Imam Ali (‘a) possessed. Perhaps the most important of these are:

Firstly: The Imam (‘a) enjoyed great powers of knowledge, part of which was his complete understanding of the rules of divine law, especially legal issues in which he was the final authority. 'If Ali was not there, Umar would have been destroyed,' is a well-known statement of Umar in that respect. Indeed the Imam (‘a) was unparalleled in this regard; books have been written about his marvelous judgments.

Turning to politics and administration, we find that Ali (‘a) was most conversant with these matters. The document he wrote for Malik al-Ashtar [when he appointed him governor of Egypt] is the strongest proof of that. This noble document covered Islamic political issues in a way no constitution or any other political document, whether Islamic or otherwise, has done. It has discussed the duties of the state towards its citizens ensuring for them security and comfort. Similarly, it has outlined the characteristics of governors and public officials. It mentions the standards they are supposed to meet: capability, trust-

1- The hadith of al-Ghadir is accepted by all the Muslims.

worthiness, full knowledge of the work they are entrusted with, perfect morals and excellent manners, refraining from sin with respect to their religion and state funds. These and other brilliant articles that are contained in that document form the epitome of the originality of the policy of this Imam (‘a) who was the standard bearer of social justice on earth.

The Imam wrote numerous letters to his governors and officers concerning general matters of social reform and this shows the extent to which he was conversant with the policies that could cater for the major issues that society yearns for.

Just as the Imam (‘a) was the most well-informed of the Muslims about just policies, he was also the most knowledgeable in other sciences such as theology, philosophy, arithmetic and astronomy. al-Aqqad says: 'He has opened many doors on the sciences; they number more than thirty.' Now with all this vast knowledge that the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) possessed, why should not the Prophet (s) have chosen him as the caliph, an office that serves as the centre of his nation's independence, liberty and honour?

By virtue of the logic which prefers the general good over everything else, the Imam's (‘a) unlimited store of knowledge necessitated that he should be the sole candidate for the nation's leadership, for God, the Exalted, says:

﴿ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

"Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?"[1]

Nothing is as ridiculous as the idea of the permissibility of preferring the inferior (*al-mafdul*) to the superior (*al-fadil*). For this logic is in total disagreement with Islamic values which considers it imperative to confer precedence to the learned and nominate them for sensitive posts. To do otherwise is surely a crime against knowledge and an attack on noble values.

Secondly, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) was among the bravest of people. His bravery encompassed all the nations of the world when he said: 'Should the Arabs join hands to fight me, I will not flee.' Islam

1- *Surah al- Zomar, 39:9.*

has been consolidated by his sword and it has been raised by virtue of his *jihad* (struggling in the way of God) and his efforts. He is famous for his firm stances at well-known events: the battles of Badr, Hunayn, al-Ahzab (the confederates), etc. He made the heads of the idolaters roll and annihilated their chiefs, thereby spreading bereavement, grief and mourning among the tribes of the Quraysh. No frontier would become insecure but Ali (‘a) would go forth and restore its security. In all campaigns and battles the Prophet (s) appointed him commander and charged him with the general command of the army. He did not enter a war but God made him victorious. He was the one who humiliated and overpowered the Jews; he conquered their forts at Khaybar, broke their power and extinguished their fire.

Courage is among the basic elements necessary for anyone taking on the reigns of leadership of the community. Should a leader be weak and chicken-hearted catastrophes would befall the country. Since this character is found in the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) in its loftiest and deepest form, why should not the Prophet (s) have nominated the former for succession and leadership after him? By virtue of his rare valour which was accompanied by all the noble traits, Imam Ali (‘a) specifically deserved the position of leader of the community even if there was no decree from the Prophet (s) to that effect.

Thirdly, the most important quality a prospective caliph should possess is self-abnegation; he should put the nation's interest above all else and tread with full caution with regard to public funds. This quality was one of the most outstanding features the Imam (‘a) was known by during his rule. Neither the Muslims nor other people know of a ruler who denounced the world and refused all its delights the way the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) did. He never set aside for himself or his family anything from the state funds, from which he severely abstained.

The Imam (‘a) ruled the Muslims based on pure justice and plain truth. He treated them equally with respect to rights and duties, in distributing the stipends and before the law. No religion or school of thought has provided by way of laws anything like what is prescribed by his justice and equity system, which was out to defend man's honour and rights.

Fourthly, among the features of a leader who will head the nation is that he should be a pious person who will not prefer worldly

possessions above obedience to God, the Exalted. This was one of the most outstanding features of the Imam (‘a) for he abstained totally from whatever would not make him gain proximity to God. He was the one who said: 'I swear by God if I were to be given the seven regions with all their celestial spheres so that I should disobey God by robbing a locust of a wheat grain it is holding in its mouth I would not have done that.' He was the greatest caller to God next to the Prophet (s). His *Nahj al-Balaghah* (a collection of Imam Ali's (‘a) sayings and speeches compiled by Sharif al-Radi) is replete with beautiful sermons which are full of invitations to piety and warnings of God's punishment. None of the Muslim kings are known to have produced something similar to that.

One of the manifestations of Imam Ali's piety is his refusal to accept the caliphate when, after Umar's assassination, Abd al-Rahman bin Awf pressed him to become the caliph on the condition that he should endorse the practices of Abubakr and Umar. He rejected this condition and insisted that he would act based on the book of God, the Sunna of His Apostle (s) and his own judgment. Had Ali (‘a) been a power seeker he would have readily accepted the condition so that later he would follow his own opinion, and should Abd al-Rahman protest, he would simply arrest him.

Humanity, with all the progress and achievement it has attained, has never seen, throughout the historical epochs, a ruler who possessed Imam Ali's piety and freedom from worldly desires and pleasures. He spared no efforts to dispense justice fully among the Muslims so that the groans of the wronged, the needy or the poor would no longer be heard.

These are some aspects of Imam Ali's personality, so why should the Prophet (s) not have nominated him for the caliphate? *If we are to accept the hereditary principle by which the Muhajirun pleaded their case against the Ansar and won, we will find that Imam Ali (‘a) was more deserving of the caliphate than all else. He was the Prophet's cousin, his son-in-law and the father of his two [beloved] grandsons.*

Sidio says: If the hereditary principle had been accepted–and it favoured Ali from the outset–it would have been able to prevent the disastrous controversies that plunged Islam in blood. Fatima's (‘a) husband was the rightful caliph both by virtue of his being the legal

heir of the Apostle (s) and by virtue of [the principle of] election.' Surely, deep reflection free from imitation and other sentiments will reach the conclusion that the Prophet (s) undoubtedly appointed Imam Ali (‘a), by an explicit declaration, as the successor and leader after him, not on the basis of heredity or other worldly considerations, but because of the leadership qualities that were found in him to the highest degree.

The belief that the Prophet (s) had overlooked the issue of succession and never alluded to it at all, and that he had left the issue to the Muslims and allowed them the freedom to elect whoever they wanted, has no iota of truth and reality. This is very far from the Prophet's (s) behaviour and his intense desire to make his nation happy and protect it from deviation and decadence.

THE AHL AL-BAYT (‘a)
UNDER THE PATRONAGE
OF THE QUR'AN AND SUNNAH

The great Prophet (s) appointed a brilliant overseer who would preserve his nation and protect it from discord and deviation. This was his family (*Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a)), the custodians of his knowledge; the propagators of his wisdom; the eminent personages of his nation in terms of faith, guidance and behaviour; and also the closest people to him who resembled him most with regard to piety, and commitment to the letter of Islam. The holy Qur'an and the noble Prophet (s) have thrown light on their merits and high stations. Below we shall mention those aspects that pertain to our discussion.

In the Holy Qur'an

The holy Qur'an which falsehood cannot approach from before it or from behind has proclaimed the merit and exalted station of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and God's praise for them makes the praise of anyone else dispensable. Here are some verses that talk about their merit:

The verse of Affection

God, the Exalted, has commanded in His great book that every Muslim, man and woman, should have affection for the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a).* God says: *"Say, 'I do not ask of you any reward for it except affection for [my] relatives."* Whoever performs a good deed, we shall enhance for him its goodness. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-appreciative.'[1]

Affection for the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) is a form of tribute to the great Deliverer (s), a means of paying respect to his kinsmen, and gratitude for the severe hardships and uncouth behaviour which he endured for the sake of delivering the Muslims from idolatry and liberating their

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1- *Surah Shoura, 42:23.*

minds from the idols and superstitions of paganism. Indeed, God has made loyalty for his near relations a binding duty on every Muslim.

Imam Muhammad bin Idris al-Shafi'i says: 'O Progeny of God's Apostle! Love for you is a God–imposed obligation that he revealed in the Qur'an. It suffices as your great rank that whoever does not invoke blessings for you in his prayer, it shall not be valid.'[1]

Ibn al-Arabi says: 'I consider my loyalty to the family of Taha (Muhammad) an obligation which, in spite of the remote ones, will confer nearness on me.The Apostle did not seek anything for conveying the guidance, any reward except affection for [his] relatives.'

Al-Kumayt, the poet of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) says: 'We have found in the Family of *Haa Meem* a sign which is interpreted by our learned ones and interpreters.

The narrators of *hadith* relate that a Bedouin called on the Prophet (s) and said to him: 'O Muhammad! Explain Islam to me. He said to him: 'You bear witness that there is no god except Allah alone, He has no partner, and that Muhammad is His servant and Apostle.'

The Bedouin said: 'Will you request of me any reward for it?'

'No. I only request affection for the relatives.'

'My relatives or yours?'

'My relatives.'

'Let me pledge my allegiance to you. May the curse of God be on him who does not love you and your relatives!' 'Amen.'[2]

Imam Ali bin al-Husayn, the lord of those who prostrate and the adornment of the worshippers (‘a), also invoked this verse as his argument when he was taken to Yazid bin Mu'awiya, the Pharaoh of his time. They were on their way to Damascus when a Syrian in an excited state, said to him: 'Praise be to God who killed you, annihilated you and nipped sedition in the bud.'

1- Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, 88.
2- Hilyat al-Awliya, 3: 201.

The Imam (‘a) looked at the man and seeing that he had been duped into leaving the right path by Umayyad propaganda, he asked him:

'Have you read the Qur'an?'

'Yes'

'Have you read *Surah Haa Meem*?'

'I have read the Qur'an but I have not read al-*Haa Meem*.'

'Have you not read 'Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except affection for [my] relatives?'

Then the man was startled and a shiver ran down his spine. He realized that he was greatly mistaken, so he quickly asked: 'Indeed, are you them?'

'Yes.'[1]

Imam al-Hasan (‘a) the beloved of the Apostle of God (s) referred to this holy verse and indicated that it was revealed concerning them (the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*). He said 'I am from that Household for which God has commanded every Muslim to have affection. The Blessed and Exalted says: *'Say, 'I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives: whoever performs a good deed, we shall enhance for him its goodness.' Performing a good deed is to have affection for us, the Ahl al-Bayt*.'[2]

The verse on the Prayer Contest (Mubahalah)

Among the clear verses of God's book which celebrate the merit of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and their distinguished status is the verse on the Prayer Contest (*al-Mubahalah*). God, the Exalted says:

﴿فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ﴾

"Should anyone argue with you concerning Him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons,

1- Tafsir al-Tabari, 25: 16.
2- Hayat al-Imam al-Hasan, 1: 68.

our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah's curse upon the liars."[1]

This noble verse was revealed in connection with a very important historical contest between the Prophet (s) and a religious delegation of the Christians of Najran. They had come to Yathrib (Medina) to debate with the Prophet (s) about Islam and after some discussion the two sides agreed to humbly call down God's curse and torment on the liars who had deviated from the truth. They appointed a time for the contest and when it came the Prophet (s) came out for it, taking along with him the best and most honourable Muslims in the sight of God: the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), his pure daughter, Fatima al-Zahra (‘a), al-Hasan and al-Husayn, the lords of the youth of paradise (‘a).

The Christians came forth well-prepared. They were led by their chief (*al-Sayyid*) and his deputy (*al-'Aqib*), accompanied by their two sons who were bedecked with jewels and vestments. Fursan bin al-Harith was also with them.When they saw the group of the Prophet (s) which consisted of his family, they became frightened and anxious. The Prophet (s) knelt down in preparation for the prayer but the awed chief and his deputy approached him and said:

'O Abu al-Qasim, with whom are you going to engage in the *mubahalah* with us?'

The Prophet (s) answered them: 'I will engage in the *mubahalah* with you along with the best people on earth and the most honourable in the sight of God,' pointing to Imam Ali, Fatima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a).

They said: 'Why did you not bring for it men of honour, and the elders, and those with marks of distinction, from among the people who believe in you and follow you?'

Then the Prophet (s) assured them that his family were the best of creation and the people most honoured by God, the Exalted. He said: 'Certainly, I will engage in the *mubahalah* through these people, the best on earth and the best of creation.'

1- *Surah Ale-Imran, 3:60.*

They became confused and realized that the Apostle of God (s) was on the right. Therefore, they quickly returned to their leader, the bishop, and said to him: 'O Abu Harithah what is your opinion in this matter?' The bishop was also gripped by consternation and filled with awe by the Prophet (s) and his family. He said:

"I am seeing such faces, should anybody pray to God to move a mountain from its position for their sake, He would do so. Do you not see Muhammad raising his hands up waiting for what you will bring back? I swear by Christ that if he [Muhammad] pronounces one word we shall never return to our families or possessions."

Then he warned them against taking part in the *mubahalah*, saying:

'Do you not see the colour of the sun changing, dark clouds gathering over the horizon, the sky becoming dark and reddish, winds blowing violently and these hills emitting smoke? Surely, punishment is looking down on us. Look at the birds, they are vomiting out [the contents of] their crops. Look at how the trees are shedding their leaves. Look at how the earth is shaking beneath our feet.'

Indeed those noble faces that were dear to God, the Exalted, had overwhelmed that group of Christians. Thus, they hastily returned to the Prophet (s) and said: 'O Abu al-Qasim, Pardon us, may God pardon your faults.'

Then they submitted to the Prophet's (s) demands and then he told them that had they chosen to go ahead with the prayer contest (*mubahalah*) the Christians would have perished. He said: "I swear by Him in whose hand is my life, chastisement has been hanging above the heads of the people of Najran. If they had taken part in the *mubahalah* they would have been transmuted into apes and pigs, their valley would have been set ablaze, God would have annihilated Najran and her inhabitants including the birds that dwell in trees and before a year elapsed all Christians would have perished."

The *mubahalah* made the importance of the Prophet's (s) family clear and showed that they were a unique group whose faith and piety had no parallel in Islam. If the Prophet (s) had found a better group, he would have chosen them for the *mubahalah* contest. If there were others who were equal to them in merit, he would not have presented his family alone because, as the scholars of *usul* (principles of Islamic

jurisprudence) teach, it is repugnant to prefer (one of two things) without any grounds for such a preference.

The Apostle of God (s) did not summon, for that occasion, anyone from his larger family; he did not summon his father's brother Abbas nor any of the sons of the Hashimites.Nor did he invite any of his honourable wives,nor the wives of the Immigrants (*Muhajirun*) and the Ansar (*Ansar*), although,of course, he was aware of them. This indicates the merit and great rank of God, the Exalted, conferred on the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*: "That is Allah's grace which He grants to whomever He wishes, and Allah is the Dispenser of great grace."

Imam Sharaf al-Din (may God illuminate his tomb) says:"You know that, the fact that the Prophet (s) took them with him in the *mubahalah,* and his instructions were that they should only say '*Amen*' as he prayed, was enough for them.That he had chosen them for that important mission and made that high rank exclusively their own to the exclusion of all other people who had precedence in meritorious deeds, compounded their exellence, which no one before or after them can attain.That the holy Qur'an should contain a command that the Prophet (s) should take them alone with him for the *mubahalah* is a third merit which enhanced their honour and glory as being their special priviledge."

The noble verse cited above shows that the Commander of the Faithful (‘a.) was the 'soul' of the Apostle of God (s) as is clearly intended by God's saying: '…and our souls and your souls.' If Ali (‘a.) was the soul of God's Apostle (s), then he was more entitled to the succession than anyone else, because he was an extension of the person of the Apostle (s). Furthermore, this verse implies that the Imam (‘a.) was the best of all God's creatures by virtue of his being the soul of the Apostle of God (s) who was the best of all created beings.

Al-Fakhr al-Razi points to this fact, saying: There was in Rayy, a man called Mahmud bin al-Hasan al-Himsi, who was a Shi'ah Imamiyyah scholar. He used to claim that Ali (‘a) was superior to all the Prophets, barring Muhammad (s), and argued that God the Exalted had said: '…and our souls and your souls' and since by soul, the soul of the Muhammad (s) was not intended, because one does not summon himself. It must have meant other than him and [the scholars] are unanimous that Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) was that other. Therefore, the

Qur'anic verse implies that Ali's (‘a) soul was Muhammad's (s), but it is impossible to consider the one was identical to the other, so what was meant is that one was similar to the other. This necessitates that they were equal in every respect. We recognise an exception to this general rule in the two cases of prophethood and the excellence of Muhammad (s) over Ali (‘a). With regard to the first, there are proofs that Muhammad (s) was a prophet, unlike Ali (‘a) and with regard to the second, there is consensus of opinion (*ijma'*) to the effect that Muhammad was superior to Ali (‘a), thus, anything apart from these two cases remains applicable. Also, *ijma'* implies that Muhammad (s) was superior to the other Prophets (‘a.), so it follows that Ali (‘a) was necessarily superior to the other Prophets.'[1]

The Verse of the Pious

Among the verses revealed by God which proclaim the excellence and distinction of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a.) over others is the verse of the Pious. God, the Exalted, says:

﴿إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا ۞ عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا﴾

"Indeed, the pious will drink from a cup seasoned with Kafur, a spring where the servants of God drink, which they make to gush forth as they please. They fulfill their vows and fear a day whose evil will be widespread."[2]

Qur'anic exegetes are unanimous[3] that this verse was revealed concerning the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and they have related that the reason for the revelation of this chapter was that al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a) had fallen sick and their grandfather, the Apostle of God (s) had gone to visit them in the company of a group of his companions. They

1- Tafsir al-Razi 2:488.
2- *Surah al-Insan, 76:5-7.*
3- See al-Waqidi's Asbab al-Nuzul p.33; Tafsir al-Razi 8:392: Ruh al-Ma'ani 6:546; al-Qunduzi's Yanabi' al-Mawaddah 1:93 and al-Maqrizi's Imta' al-Asma' p.502.

requested the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) to make a vow to God that if He cured them, he would fast.

Accordingly, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) made the vow to fast for three days, and so did the truthful one, the lady of all women (i.e. Fatima) and her maid Fiddah. When al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a) regained their health, they all fasted. The Imam (‘a) did not have any food [with which to they would break their fast] so he borrowed three measures *sa'*s of wheat for that. On the first day the truthful Fatima (‘a) grounded and prepared one *sa'* and baked some bread but when it was time for breaking the fast a destitute knocked the door and asked for some food. Then they gave out their food to him and took only water.

On the second day the Prophet's daughter (‘a) again prepared some food that was mainly composed of wheat bread. When it was time to break the fast an orphan who had been exhausted with hunger came asking for help, so they gave him their food and again drank only water.

On the third day the Lady of all women (‘a) milled the remaining wheat and baked some loaves. As usual, when the time came for breaking their fast came a captive knocked at the door asking for food. So they withdrew their hands from their food and gave it to him.

Glory be to God! Which altruism equals this? Which act of charity is greater than this charitable deed, which was done only for the sake of God, the Generous?

On the fourth day the Prophet (s) saw them, their bodies quivering because of hunger. He said: 'Help! Are the family of Muhammad dying of hunger?' He had hardly finished his words when Gabriel descended, conveying greetings of Heaven to the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and presenting to them their reward for that act of charity. It was a recompense that was indescribable and immeasurable! It was forgiveness, mercy and the pleasure of God, the Exalted, saying, *'He has rewarded their patience with a garden and [garments] of silk'* and bestowed on them a chapter from His book which attests to their high position in the sight of God, the Exalted.

The Verse of Purification

Another clear verse of the holy Qur'an which God the Exalted has revealed concerning the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) is the verse of purification. God the Exalted has said:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا﴾

"Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O people of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification."[1]

Umm Salamah, one of the Mothers of the Believers [i.e. the Prophet's wives] has reported that 'This verse was revealed in my house while Fatima, Ali, Hasan and Husayn (‘a) [were together with the Messenger of God (s)]. So he covered them also with a cloak with which he was covering himself and he prayed: 'O God! These people are my Household, remove all impurity and purify them with a thorough purification.' He repeated this thrice.

Umm Salamah had witnessed this episode, so she said: 'Am I among you, O Messenger of God?' However, he said: 'You should be pleased that you are among the good.'[2] Thereafter, the noble verse descended concerning them.[3]

This Qur'anic verse clearly indicates that the people referred to have been protected from all forms of impurity and sin, i.e. they were infallible. The verse begins with the word *innama* which is the strongest article of restriction (*adat al-hasr*) [i.e. restricting an object to a subject in a sentence, and vice versa]. Another indicator that their infallibility is derivable from this verse is the occurring of the definite article (*al*) in a declarative sentence or clause (*al-jumlah al-khabariyah*), and a third is the repetition of the word al-*taharah* (purification). According to the rules of Arabic Language, these three things denote a restriction (*al-hasr*) of the removal of all forms of

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1- *Surah al-Ahzab, 33:33.*

2- Al-Hakim's Mustadrak 2: 416; Usd al-Ghabah 5:521.

3- Al-Fakhr al-Razi's al-Tafsir 6: 783, Muslim's al-Sahih 2: 331, al-Khasa'is al-Kubra 2: 188, Ahmad bin Hanbal's al-Musnad 4: 107, al-Bayhaqi's al-Sunan 2: 150; Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti recorded in Durr al-Manthur twenty narrations to the effect that the verse is specifically referring to the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a); al-Tabari recorded ten such narrations in his Tafsir.

impurity and sin to them alone. This total removal of sin and impurities is the same infallibility which the Shi'ah ascribe to their Imams.

In the Sunnah (Prophetic Traditions)

A number of hadiths have been reported from the Prophet (s) about the merit of his kinsmen, the necessity of loving them, and the fact that they were the ships of deliverance and the equals of the Qur'an.

Here are some of them:

1- Abu Bakr reported: 'I have seen The Apostle of God (s) supporting himself on an Arabian bow. He had pitched a tent and Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn were in it. Then he said: O you Muslims! I am at peace with whoever is at peace with the people of this tent, at war with whoever is at war with them, and friend to whoever is friend to them. No one loves them except the fortunate, and no one hates them except the wretched, that is of mean birth."[1]

2- Zayd bin Arqam reported from the Apostle of God (s) who said to Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn: I am at war with whoever you are at war and at peace with whomever you are at peace."[2]

3- Ahmad bin Hanbal reports in his *Musnad* that [one day] the Prophet (s) held the hands of Hasan and Husayn and said: Whoever loves me and loves these two, their father and their mother will be with me in my station on the Day of Resurrection.'[3]

4- Jabir [ibn Abdillah al-Ansari] narrates that one day at Arafat, the Apostle of God (s), while Ali (‘a) was facing him, said: 'Come closer to me, O Ali. We have both been created from a tree: I am its trunk, you are its branches. Whoever clings to one of its branches, God will admit him into paradise."[4]

1- Al-Riyad al-Nadirah, 25:252.
2- Sahih al-Tirmidhi, 2:314; A similar version: "I am at peace with whoever you are at peace and at war with whoever you are at war", has been reported from the Prophet (s) by al-Hakim in al-Mustadrak, 3:149, bin al-Athir in Usd al-Ghabah, 5:523 and Ahmad bin Hanbal in Musnad, 25:242.
3- Ahmad bin Hanbal's Musnad, 1:77; Sahih al-Tirmidhi, 2:301.
4- Ahmad bin Hanbal's al-Musnad, 1:77.

5- Bin Abbas narrates that the Apostle of God (s) said: "The stars [guide] the inhabitants of the earth and save them from drowning while my *Ahl al-Bayt* save my community from disagreement. If any tribe of the Arabs opposes them, it will fall into disagreement and become the party of Satan."[1]

6- Zayd bin Arqam narrates that the Apostle of God (s) said: "I am leaving among you two weighty things. If you hold fast to them you shall not go astray after me. One of them is greater than the other: The book of God which is [like] a rope stretched from the heavens down to the earth, and my kinsmen that is my household (*Ahl al-Bayt*). These two things will never separate till they come to me at the Pond [of al-*Kawthar* in the next world] so take care how you treat them after me."[2]

The hadith of al-*thaqalayn* (the two weighty things) is among the most beautiful Prophetic ahadith and the most widely circulated among the Muslims. The Prophet (s) had repeated it several times and one occasion was reported by Zayd bin Arqam thus: the Apostle of God (s) stopped at al-Juhfah and, facing the people, he praised God and commended Him and then said: "I have not found a Prophet, but he lived only half of what the one who precedes him lived. I will soon be summoned [by God] and I will answer. What is your comment?"

The people answered: 'You have acted in good faith." Then he asked: "Do not you bear witness that there is no deity except God and Muhammad is His servant and apostle, and that [the question of] paradise is true and [the question of] hell is true?"

"We do", they replied.

Then the Prophet (s) raised his hand and placed it on his chest and said: "I also bear witness along with you' and added: "Are you listening?"

"Yes", they answered.

1- Al-Hakim's Mustadrak 3: 149. In Kanz al-Ummal (6:116), al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah (111), al-Manawi's Fayd al-Qadir (6:297) and al-Haithami's Majma' al-Zawa'id (9:174), it is reported that the Prophet (s) has said: "The stars protect that inhabitants of the earth while my kinsmen (Ahl al-Bayt) protect my community."

2- Sahih al-Tirmidhi, 2:308; Usd al-Ghabah, 2:12.

Then he said: I will precede you to the pond and you will meet me there. Its width is the distance between San'aa and Basra and it has silver cups that are as many as the stars. Be careful how you treat the two weighty things after me."

Then someone called out: "What are the two weighty things, O Apostle of God?"

He answered: "God's book, one side of which is in the hand of God, the Mighty and Sublime, and the other in your hands, so hold fast to it; and the other [weighty thing] is my kinsmen. The Kind and Knowing [God] has informed me that the two shall never separate till they come to meet me at the pond." Therefore I prayed that my Lord should grant them this quality, so do not precede them lest you perish, do not lag behind them and do not teach them [anything] for they are more knowledgeable than you are."

Then he took Ali's (‘a) hand and said: Whoever I have more authority over him than he has over himself then Ali is his patron. O God! Be a friend to whoever is a friend to him and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him."[1]

On his death bed also, the Prophet (s) had proclaimed this hadith of al-*thaqalayn,* when he addressed his companions, saying:

"O people! I may soon meet my death when I shall be taken away. I have forewarned you as an excuse: Listen! I am leaving behind among you the book of my Lord, the Sublime and Mighty; and my kinsmen, that is, my household." Then he held up the hand of Ali (‘a) and said: This is Ali, he is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with him; they will never separate till they both come to meet me at the Pond."[2]

The hadith of al-*thaqalayn* is among the sound and reliable of Prophetic ahadith. al-Manawi relates that al-Samhudi has said: More than twenty companions have related this hadith concerning this matter.[3] bin Hajar has said: "This hadith is transmitted through many chains on the authority of twenty-odd companions."[4]

1- Al-Haithami's Majma' al-Zawa'id.
2- Al-Sawaiq al-Muhriqah p. 50.
3- Fayd al-Qadir, 3:14.
4- Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, p. 136.

The hadith of al-*thaqalayn* has restricted the Imamship to the Prophet's household (‘a). It has also shown that they were protected from deviation and they were immaculate and clear of all impurity and sin, because it has conjoined them with the book of God Almighty, which 'falsehood cannot approach from before or from behind it.' It is quite natural that any deviation on their part from the path of guidance would be considered a form of separation from the great book, therefore the hadith clearly and explicitly denotes their infallibility.

7. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri narrates: 'I have heard the holy Prophet (s) saying: Indeed, my household among you is comparable to Noah's ship; whoever came on board was delivered and whoever stayed behind was drowned. Indeed, my household among you is comparable to the Gate of Relief for the children of Israel: whoever entered through it is forgiven."[1]

Imam Sharaf al-Din commented on this hadith in these words:

"You know that what is meant by comparing them with the ship of Noah is that whoever had recourse to them in matters of religion by receiving both its fundamentals and branches from their Imams would be saved from the torment of hell fire; and whoever failed to follow their guidance would be like the one who took shelter in the hills on the day of the deluge, that he might be saved from God's decree. However, the latter drowned in water, while the former will sink in hell – we seek refuge from God.

The point in comparing them (the *Ahl al-Bayt* ‘a) with the Gate of Relief is that God the Exalted has made that gate a manifestation of humbleness and humility before His greatness, and submission to His decree, and it was for this reason that it served as the source of forgiveness.

Ibn Hajar has indeed tried when, after narrating this and similar hadiths, he commented:

The point of analogy with the ship is that whoever loves and reveres them as a form of gratitude to the One Who conferred them honour, and follows the guidance of their learned ones is saved from the

1-Majma' al-Zawa'id, 9:168; al-Hakim's al-Mustadrak, 2:43; Tarikh Baghdad, 2:19.

darkness of contradictions; and he who fails to do so drowns in the sea of ingratitude and perishes in the dangers of lawlessness.

Ibn Hajar adds: "The point of comparison between them and the gate of Relief is that God the Exalted has made entering through that gate, which was the gate of Jericho or Jerusalem, with humility and seeking forgiveness, a means of pardon; and for this community He has made love for *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) to be the means for it."[1]

Indeed the Prophet (s) has made his *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)* analogous to Noah's ship, so to have recourse to them and love them is a means of salvation while to hate them, is to court deviation and ruin.

8- The Apostle of God (s) has said: "Knowing the Household of Muhammad is freedom from hell fire, love for the Household of Muhammad is a license for [passing over] the Bridge (*al-sirat*) [between hell and paradise] and partisanship (*al-wilayah*) for Muhammad's Household is a security against torment [in the hereafter]."[2]

9- The Apostle of God (s) has said: "Consider the position of my *Ahl al-Bayt* among you like the position of the head to the body and the eyes to the head; the head is not guided except with the eyes."[3]

10- The Apostle has also said: "The feet of a servant [of God, i.e., any man] will not move, on the day of Resurrection, until he is asked about four things: his life and how he spent it; his body and how he wore it out; his wealth and how he spent it and from where he earned it; and our love, we the *Ahl al-Bayt*."[4]

11- The Apostle of God (s) has said: "Whoever is happy to live the way I live, die the way I die and [then] live in the Garden of Eden which my Lord has planted, should be Ali's partisan after me and be the partisan of his partisan[s]. Let him also follow the footsteps of my *Ahl al-Bayt* after me, for they are my kinsmen who have been created of my stuff and endowed with my understanding and

1- Al-Muraja'at p. 54.
2- Al-Muraja'at p. 58, quoting from al-Shifa p. 40.
3- Al-Muraja'at p. 58, quoting from al-Sharaf al-Mu'abbad p. 58.
4- Al-Muraja'at, quoting from al-Suyuti's Ihya’ al-Mayyit and al-Nabhani's al-Arba'in.

> knowledge. Woe unto those among my community who shall belie their merit, those who shall sever the bonds of my kinship with respect to them. May God never let them have my intercession!"[1]

A great number of similar ahadith have been reported from the great Apostle (s) in which he has mentioned the excellence of his kinsmen and their high stations in the sight of God the Exalted. He who ponders on these narrations and on the previously quoted verses of the Qur'an will perceive the purpose of God and his Apostle, namely, entrusting the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) with the centre of authority that will act as the spiritual and temporal leader of the Muslim community. This is because they were more deserving of the Prophet's (s) position since they had been educated along his guidance and they had partaken of his wisdom and manners.

Surely, God the Exalted has chosen them as leaders and guides for His servants and also as the trustees in charge of propagating His message. Certainly, if the Muslim nation had taken them as leader on the demise of the Apostle (s) it would not have had to face disasters and crises. Indeed, to God do we belong to Him do we return!

Shi'ite Loyalty to the Prophet's Household (‘a)

The Shi'ites' love and loyalty to the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) is not a mere emotional affair nor does it stem from blind imitation; rather they have been led to do so by conclusive evidence from the Book and the Sunnah which made love and loyalty for the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) a binding duty. Nor could the Shi'ites act against the dictates of God's book and His Prophet's (s) Sunnah.

Since the dawn of their history the Shi'ah believed in the love for the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and this has been one of the elements of their doctrine. Here we should examine the extent of their loyalty and love for the Prophet's Household (‘a) to see whether they exceed the proper bounds in it.

One: The Shi'ah receive both their beliefs and practices of religion from the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*, being unanimously agreed on the necessity of acting upon the Imam's (‘a) sayings and actions, believing

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1- Kanz al-Ummal 6: 217.

that these are part of the Sunnah, the practicing of which is mandatory. In this way, the Shi'ah founded their doctrines based on what they received from the Imams (‘a), and this is not a matter of factionalism or bigotry, but they were following the dictates of conclusive religious teachings.

On this point Imam Sharaf al-Din (may God illuminate his tomb) says:

'We are devoted to other than the Ash'ari school in matters of doctrine and the four schools in matters of jurisprudence not because of factionalism and bigotry, or because we question the jurisprudential expertise (*ijtihad*) of the leaders of those schools, or because they lacked probity and uprightness, or because they were not great men both in terms of knowledge and action. However, religious proofs have led us to follow the school of the Prophet's Household (‘a), the receptacle of the message, the haunting place of the angels and the place of descent of the revelation. So we devoted ourselves to them concerning the beliefs and practices of religion, the principles of jurisprudence, the sciences of the Sunnah and the Book, and ethics and etiquette. We only act in this way because we go by the available proofs and are devoted to the Sunnah of the Master of the Prophets and the messengers, may God bless them all.

"If those dictates permit us to disobey the Household of Muhammad (‘a) or, we are able to gain proximity to God the Glorious (*qurbah*) if we were to perform our religious acts based on other schools of jurisprudence we would have aligned ourselves with the majority of Muslims, in order to bolster the bonds of fraternity and brotherhood. However the available Proofs at hand preclude all this."[1]

Sharaf al-Din adds: "And I do not think that anybody would dare say that they (i.e. the founders of the Sunni schools), surpassed our Imams (‘a) in knowledge and action, since they were of the pure Progeny; the community's ship of salvation; its Gate of Relief; its security against disagreement on questions of religion, and its guideposts; and the Messenger of God's (s) weighty ones. Indeed, the Messenger of God (s) has said: "So do not precede them lest you perish, and do not fall behind them lest you perish, for they are more knowledgeable than you." However, the issue has been politicized and

1- Al –Muraja'at, p. 40-41.

what serious consequences politics has had in the early period of Islam is visible to all!

On his part, Shaykh al-Azhar Shaykh Salim [with whom Sayyid Sharaf al-Din was exchanging correspondences] supported this observation in these words: "Indeed your twelve Imams are more worthy of being followed because all of them were following a single school of jurisprudence which they refined and established through their consensus; whereas the differences that exist between the four schools [of Sunnism] transcend all topics of jurisprudence so that they cannot be united. It is obvious that what a single individual examines cannot match the work of twelve Imams in terms of precision. This issue leaves for the fair minded no room for hesitation, nor does it allow the deviant a chance."[1]

It is quite natural that to work with the sayings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and subscribe to their way with regard to Islamic jurisprudence is not to go out of proper bounds of religion or to be fanatic in their love.

Two: Another indication of the Shi'ah's love for their Imams (‘a) is how they commemorate them and celebrate their excellent qualities. They, as well, organize mourning ceremonies for the untold hardships the Imams (‘a) endured at the hands of the ungodly rulers of their day, who subjected them to great pain; killing and imprisoning them to exterminate these great men. This same practice was also unleashed on their Shi'ah.

Three: Another mark of the Shi'ah's devotion for the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) is visiting their tombs for the sake of seeking blessings and nearness to God, the Exalted. This is among the greatest manifestations of having love for the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*, the affection for whom God has enjoined on all Muslims. We shall mention in due course how the arguments of those who consider visiting the graves a heresy are inferior.

The Shi'ah and Extremism (al-Ghulu)

The Shi'ah have been unjustly accused of extremism with respect to their Imams (‘a), although they are innocent of it. It is pertinent to examine this matter more closely.

1- Al-Muraja'at, p. 44.

The true nature of this Extremism: Real extremism (*al-ghulu*) is to ascribe divinity to the Imams (‘a); that they are the creators and sustainers of the world as some extremists (*al-ghulat*) say concerning the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (‘a) was:

"He, who destroyed the Ad and the Thamud through a disaster;

He, who spoke with Moses from above the Mount, as they conversed intimately

He, who, one day, as he ascended the pulpit said: 'Ask me, O you people!'

And they became bewildered as to its meaning."

This poem exhibits the epitome of *ghulu* with respect to the Commander of the Faithful (‘a). Some extremists even claim that he was the son of God, a view Sayyid al-Himyari refutes, saying:

They are a people who exceeded all bounds concerning Ali, how wretched they are! They toiled for his love.

They said he was the son of God; Too Exalted is our Creator to have a son or to be a father![1]

This is the real nature of *ghulu* and it clearly means the ascribing of divinity to the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) or to any of the pure Imams of his offspring.

Shi'ism's Disavowal of Ghulu

The Shi'ah have disowned the *ghulat* and stated clearly that the latter are not among the sects of Islam and that they are the same as unbelievers. Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) said to Razam: Tell the *ghulat*: Repent and come back to God for you are sinners, infidels and polytheists.[2]

Indeed, the Infallible Imams (‘a) repudiated the *ghulat*; they declared that they were apostates and commanded that they should be ostracized. Sahl bin Ziyad has reported: A companion of ours wrote to Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (‘a) saying: May I be your ransom my Lord! Ali bin Hiskah claims that he is among your partisans, that you are the

1- Al-Iqd al-Farid.
2- Minhaj al-Maqal, p. 257.

First and the Eternal, that he is your gate and Prophet and that you have directed him to propagate these beliefs. He claims that prayer, *zakat*, pilgrimage and fasting are nothing but to have knowledge of you. Many people have already been inclined to him, so will you kindly give your view on this matter so that your partisans may be saved from this disaster?'

The Imam (‘a) wrote this reply:

"Ibn Hiskah has lied, may God curse him. Alas, I do not know him as my partisan. Woe unto him! May God curse him! By God! Muhammad and the prophets (p.b.u.th) before him have not been commissioned except with the true Islamic religion (*al-Hanafiyyah*); with prayer, *zakat*, fasting and pilgrimage. Muhammad, my God bless him and his family, did not invite the people except to God alone Who has no associate, and, likewise we, the testamentary legatees (*al-awsiya*) i.e. the Imams from among his descendants, are God's servants and we ascribe no partners to him. I turn to God and disavow bin Hiskah's utterance. Keep away from him and his followers, may God curse and subject them to a life of privation! If you meet anyone of them smash his head."[1]

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) also declared his disavowal of the *ghulat*. He had said to Abu Muhammad! I repudiate anyone who claims that we are sustainers [of creation] and I repudiate anyone who claims that we are prophets."[2]

Historians are unanimous on the fact that the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (‘a) has set fire to a group of people who believed in his divinity.[3]

Indeed the Infallible Imams (‘a) have repudiated the *ghulat* and declared that they were apostates and infidels, and Shi'ah scholars have written books to refute their wrong beliefs. Among those who wrote on this topic were some scholars of the Nawbakht family, al-Fadl bin Shadhan and Sa'id bin Abdillah al-Ash'ari.

1- Minhaj al-Maqal, p. 229.
2- Minhaj al-Maqal, p. 325.
3- Al-Milal wa al-Nihal, 1:101.

We are going to close this topic with a word from Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Kashif al-Ghita. "The Shi'ah denounce those sects (i.e. the *ghulat*) and prohibit what they hold.

The essence of their beliefs or rather their deviation is that the Imam was God, the Glorious, by way of manifestation or union, similar to the beliefs of many Muslim mystics among whom were prominent Sufi Shaykhs. It is reported that people like al-Hallaj, al-Gilani, al-Rifa'i and al-Bada'i have uttered such words that outwardly denote that they had reached stations above the station of divinity,[1] if there was such a position. Something similar to that belief is the doctrine of the proponents of the unity of existence or existents (*wahdat al-wujud* or (*wahdat al-mawjud*).

But the Imamiyah Shi'ah, and by that, I mean the peoples of Iraq, Iran, the Gulf, the Arabian peninsula, millions of Indian Muslims and hundred of thousands of Syrians and Afghans, consider all those doctrines to be very repugnant forms of unbelief and deviation. Their religion is pure monotheism. They hold that the Creator does not resemble the creation in any way nor does He share their attributes of imperfection such as contingency, change, incidence and all that is incompatible with necessity of being, and other doctrines that emphasize deanthropomorphism. These things are discussed in Shi'ites' concise and comprehensive works on philosophy and theology."[2]

Surely, the Shi'ah repudiate *ghulu* and consider the *ghulat* misguided apostates, so to ascribe the same to them is outright falsehood and slander against a religious denomination which believes in One God Who has no partners, and that the prophets and testamentary legatees and all else are God's servants who are part of His creation.

1- Something curious about what some ghulat say concerning the Commander of the Faithful (s) is that the least to be said about him is that he is God the Unique, the One!

2- Hayat al-Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, 2:10.

THE GREAT TEST

However skillful at portraying the subtleties of human psychology and historical events a writer may be he or she cannot draw as vivid a picture of the disasters that had beset the Muslim community on the death of its great Prophet (s), as the holy Qur'an did. The Exalted God says:

"Muhammad is but an apostle, [other] apostles have passed before him. If he dies or is slain will you turn back on your heels? Anyone who turns back on his heels will not harm Allah in any way, and Allah will reward the grateful."[1]

This is indeed a most horrible portrait of the dreadful crises and calamities into which the Muslim community had been plunged after its saviour had passed away; it was a real counter revolution, a crushing blow on the Islamic entity, a complete volteface on Islamic doctrine and a destruction of divine law. No other shock could have been more tragic.

The Apostle (s) had breathed his last and his body was still lying in his house, not yet buried, when a dangerous schism found its way into the body of the Muslims and became the cause of a great conflict, as a result of which they faced a bitter trial throughout their history. With much grief, we shall mention briefly the prominent events that accompanied the demise of God's Apostle (s).

The Convention of al-Saqifah

I do not think there has been a more dangerous event more damaging to Muslims than the Saqifah convention, which in order to gain absolute authority over the nation became the foundation of its

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1- *Surat al-'Imran, 3:144.*

downfall and the terrors and catastrophes that visited the community. **Bulus Salamah** writes:

> 'Under the pavilion, a succession of events had excited latent wishes and desires.
>
> Inclinations were discordant like the tender boxthorn: spiky and diseased.'

Indeed the Ansar convened their meeting swiftly because they had sensed the political moves by prominent Muhajirin who represented the Quraysh force which harboured malice and animosity toward the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (‘a), because he had inflicted much harm to the Quraysh; He had set the heads of their key figures rolling.

Alluding to the Quraysh's encounter with the Imam to avenge their dead, al-Kinani says:

> 'At every decisive meeting place a young man who is merely 26, puts you to shame.
>
> This is the son of Fatima[1] who slaughtered you to the point of annihilation…'

This poem depicts the extent of malice and grudges which were harboured by the Quraysh families toward the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) who had wronged them by killing their sons for the sake of the Islamic call. Those families had staked all they possessed for the purpose of putting out the light of Islam and reverting to the life of the Age of ignorance, [i.e. the pre-Islamic condition of Arabia].

In any case, the Ansar who were the backbone of the Islamic armed forces had realized that if the Quraysh were to gain the political authority (al-Khilafah) they would definitely go to extremes in humiliating and oppressing them, seeking to avenge their people whom the Ansar had killed. al-Habbab bin al-Mundhir had said that in the speech he delivered at al-Saqifah. He said: 'However we fear that after you, those whose sons, fathers and brothers we have killed might gain power' al-Mundhir's apprehension became a reality, for when the Quraysh took the helm they oppressed the Ansar severely and subjected them to widespread deprivation. Mu'awiya the son of Hind

1- That is, Fatima bint Asad, the mother of the Commander of the Faithful (s).

and his son Yazid went to great lengths in tormenting the Ansar. The latter gave his soldiers license with respect to their lives, wealth and honour, as the criminal terrorist Muslim bin Uqbah whom historians called the immoderate, led them [into Medina] in the incident of al-Harrah, the mercilessness of which has no parallel in history.

Qurayshi Preponderance at al-Saqifah

As the Ansar were occupied with their deliberations over the issue of leadership and they had almost reached an agreement that the Ansar leader Sa'ad bin Ubadah should be the caliph, Uwaym bin Sa'idah, Ma'n bin Adiy, client of the Ansar and other partisans of Abu Bakr who were among them left the meeting and hurriedly went to Abu Bakr and Umar and apprised them of what was taking place. The two hastened to the meeting place, accompanied by Abu Ubaydah bin al-Jarrah, Salim, client of Abu Hudhayfah, and others. They took the Ansar unawares and spoiled their plans as a result of which Sa'ad bin Ubadah became pale, afraid that the matter would go out of their hands. Thus all plans of the Ansar were destroyed and all their efforts came to naught.

Abu Bakr's Speech

When the Muhajirin joined the Ansar's meeting, Umar wanted to speak first but Abu Bakr reproached him because of what he knew of Umar's vehemence and coarse attitude, which did not suit such a situation that was fraught with political danger where gentleness and skill should be employed to win the stage and control the flow of events. Therefore, Abu Bakr stood up and with a cheerful face, addressed those in attendance, saying:

"We, the Muhajirin are the first to embrace Islam and have more honourable lineages; descending from more dignified families, have more comely personages and are nearest to the Apostle of God (s) than the rest of the people. You [Ansar] are our brothers in Islam and associates in religion. You have helped and supported [the cause], may God reward you befittingly. We shall be the leaders and you the ministers. The Arabs would not pay allegiance except to this clan, the Quraysh, so do not compete with your brothers, the Muhajirin, for that by which God has preferred them over you. I have chosen for you one

of these two men, (i.e. Umar bin al-Khattab and Abu Ubaydah bin al-Jarrah)."

This speech did not mention the demise of the Apostle (s) which was indeed the greatest disaster that befell the Muslims. It was more becoming for Abu Bakr to have condoled with the Muslims on the death of their saviour who benefited them in both religious and worldly affairs. He should have summoned them for the funeral ceremonies for their leader till they had interred him in his final resting place. Thereafter, he would have convened a general convention that would involve Muslims of all classes so that they might chose out of their own free will, someone acceptable to them as successor to the Prophet (s), on the assumption that he did not nominate anyone to succeed him.

Abu Bakr's speech completely ignored also the Prophet's (s) kinsmen who were the equal of the holy Qur'an, although he should have listened to their views so that the succession would have legitimacy. On this point, Imam Sharaf al-Din says:

"Should not this patience have been directed to a gentler treatment of those grief-stricken souls who had survived the Prophet (s) and with whose care he had entrusted the believers, considering God's saying:

﴿لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾

"There has certainly come to you an apostle from among yourselves. Grievous to him is your distress; he has deep concern for you, and is most kind and merciful to the faithful."[1]

"Did not this Apostle (s), who found the distress of the Muslim community very grievous, had much concern for its felicity and was kind and merciful to it, have any right that his kinsmen should not be distressed by being surprised in this way while the dust had not yet settled and the Apostle (s) not yet been interred?"[2]

Moreover, Abu Bakr's speech at al-Saqifah did not treat what the community needed in economic, political and social domains; it was

1- *Surah al-Tawbah, 9:128.*
2- Sharaf al-Din's al-Nass wa al-Ijtihad, p. 7.

only concerned with power and authority. He requested the Ansar to relinquish power in his favour and in return, he designated them premiers, although when his power became consolidated, Abu Bakr did not appoint them to any posts in the administration.

Comments:

Supposing there was no decree of succession in favour of anyone from the household of Muhammad (s); supposing they had no distinction in terms of lineage, kinship, personal morality, struggle in defense of Islam (Jihad), Knowledge, action, faith or sincerity; supposing they possessed no precedence in any field whatsoever and they were on the same level as the other companions of the Prophet (s), was there any religious, rational or customary barrier on postponing the process of paying allegiance [the chosen successor] till the time the members of the Prophet's (s) household had finished the funeral rites for the Apostle of God (s), even if it was necessary to charge some military leadership temporarily with the duty of keeping the peace in the meantime, till the question of succession was resolved?

Would not this much patience have been a gentler treatment of those grief-striken souls who had survived the Prophet (s) and with whose care he had entrusted the believers?

Abu Bakr wins the position of Authority

By his cleverness and diplomacy, Abu Bakr won the day. He commended the Ansar and extolled them for the part they played in jihad, thereby extinguishing their fire of rebellion. A conflict had started between Umar and some of the Ansar, but Abu Bakr was able to control the situation. Then the members of his party hurriedly paid allegiance to him lest the matter should take another turn. The most enthusiastic of them at giving allegiance was Umar bin al-Khattab who was so over zealous on the matter to the point of forcing others to give their oath of fealty and when he heard the Ansar saying: '… and you killed Sa'ad!' He retorted harshly: 'Kill him! May God kill him, for he is the cause of this dissension!'[1]

1- Bin Abd Rabbih's al-Iqd al-Farid, 3:62.

After the people had paid allegiance to Abu Bakr as successor, his party surrounded and escorted him to the Prophet's (s) mosque with pomp and pageantry.[1]

Imam Ali's (‘a) Refusal to pay Allegiance

The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) detested the allegiance to Abu Bakr and considered it a dear act of aggression against him: for he knew very certainly that his position with respect to the succession was 'like the axle of the millstone; from him flowed the current and the bird could never soar up to him' – as he described himself [in *Nahj al-Balaghah*]. He did not expect that the people would deprive him of the right to the leadership and leave him alone, as he declared to his uncle, Abbas who hurried to him [before the consummation of Abu Bakr's succession] and said: 'O son of my brother! Stretch out your hand so that I can pay allegiance to you, then the people will say: 'The Apostle of God's (s) uncle has paid allegiance to the son of the Apostle of God's (s) uncle', and therefore there will be no disagreement concerning you."

"Who will seek this matter [i.e. the leadership] beside us?' the Imam (‘a) replied.

Dr. Taha Husayn comments of this conversation in these words: Abbas had considered the matter and concluded that his brother's son had more right than himself to inherit the authority because his nephew, Ali (‘a) was brought up by the Prophet (s); had precedence in being Muslim; enjoyed God's blessings by way of success in all the battles he fought; the Prophet (s) used to call him brother, so much so that one day Umm Ayman jokingly said: 'You call him your brother and you marry him to your daughter?'

The Prophet (s) said to him, 'You are to me what Aaron was to Moses, except that there will be no Prophet after me.' He [the Prophet (s)] also said to the Muslims: 'Whoever's master I am, Ali is his master.' Because of this Abbas went to his nephew after the Prophet (s) had died and said to him: 'Stretch out your hand for me to pay you allegiance.'[2]

1- Bin Abi al-Hadid's Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, 2:8.
2- Taha Husayn's Aliyun wa Banuh, p. 19.

The Imam refused to attend the ceremony of paying homage to Abu Bakr, because he was angry and he also made known his sadness on the fact that he had lost his right, mentioning it in many of his sermons and speeches. We shall mention some of them.

Sharp Protests

The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) had protested against Abu Bakr for his donning the garb of leadership, as did the daughter of God's Apostle and mistress of all women, and other outstanding figures of Islam. Below are some aspects of those protests:

The Commander of the Faithful (‘a)

The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) objected to Abu Bakr when he was forcefully brought before him and requested to pay his allegiance. He addressed him and his party saying:

"I have more right to this affair [i.e. the leadership] than you do, I will not swear allegiance to you, rather you are the people who are supposed to swear allegiance to me. You have taken away this thing from the Ansar, arguing that you were closer to the Prophet (s) than they were, but you are usurping it from us. Did you not claim that you were more deserving of this affair than the Ansar, because Muhammad (s) was from among you, and they acquiesced and submitted to you leadership? Now I am presenting the same arguments as you presented to the Ansar: we [i.e. the Prophet's household] are the closest people to the Prophet both when he was alive and now that he is dead, so do us justice if you are believers, otherwise you will knowingly be committing injustice.'

After a hot argument with Umar, Abu Bakr and bin Jarrah the Imam (‘a) addressed the Muhajirin:

'Fear God, Fear God, O Muhajirin! Do not send Muhammad's authority over the Arabs out of his house into yours, do not dislodge his household from his own right and position among the people. By God! Know, O Muhajirin, that we are the closest of all people to him, since we are the Household, and we have more right to this affair than you do. Is he not among us he who is learned in the Book God, knowledgeable in the religion of God, conversant with the precepts

(Sunnah) of God's Apostle, capable of administering the affairs of the people, one who will repel will evil things away from them and share out [the wealth] equally between them? By God such a person is surely found among us. Therefore, do not follow desires lest you stray from God's path and thereby get further away from the truth."[1]

In a letter to Mu'awiya, the Imam portrays yet another picture of his arguments against those people:

"When the Apostle of God (s) died the Arabs contested for his authority. The Quraysh contended that they were his tribe, clan and near ones and, therefore, it was not right for the rest of the Arabs to challenge them with regard to Muhammad's (s) authority and right. The Arabs saw that the Quraysh were indeed right, so they gave up. In turn, we argued that we had against the Quraysh, the same arguments they had against the rest of the Arabs, but they did not act justly towards us the same way the Quraysh did towards the other Arabs. The Quraysh took this affair to the exclusion of the rest of the Arabs, having the right arguments and a just claim, but when we, the Household and Near ones sought our rights from the Quraysh through the same way, they distanced us and took the reins, making a common cause in deceit and coercion. The appointed place is before God and He is the Guardian and the Helper.[2]

There are, throughout the *Nahj al-Balaghah*, many more examples of these brilliant arguments, which show the Imam's (‘a) great indignation against those people who had usurped his right and legacy.

Fatima al-Zahra (‘a)

The mistress of all women, Fatima al-Zahra (‘a), with whose pleasure God is pleased and with whose anger God is angered, as her father's statements declare, also denounced Abu Bakr for his occupation of the position of successor to the Prophet (s). She protested against him in her historic speech in which she called a spade a spade and urged the Muslims to overthrow his government and wrest the caliphate from him. Her frightening sermon alarmed the people who were greatly agitated to the extent that the truth nearly regained its rightful place.

1- Bin Qutaybah's al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah, 1:11-12.
2- Bin Abi al-Hadid's Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, 1:12.

However, Abu Bakr who played the diplomat, was able to control the situation; he approached Lady Fatima (‘a) with respect and friendliness and displayed before the people that he had the greatest respect and reverence for her. He did not take the reins of leadership on his personal opinion rather he had answered the call of the Muslims. In this way, Abu Bakr managed to put off for good the fire of rebellion against him.

Thereafter, Abu Bakr and his friend Umar bin al-Khattab tried to earn the pleasure of Lady Fatima (‘a) in order to lend their leadership position some legitimacy. The two sought permission to see her, but she refused. Then they tried for the second time also without success. Then they sought the Commander of the Faithful's (‘a) mediation to meet the Prophet's beloved daughter (‘a). He requested her permission and she allowed them to come, when the two men entered into her presence, *Lady Fatima (‘a) turned her noble face away from them. Then they pleaded for approval and pardon, upon which she said:*

'I adjure you by God, have you not heard God's Apostle (s) saying: Fatima's pleasure is my pleasure, Fatima's anger is my anger, so whoever loves Fatima has indeed loved me, whoever pleased Fatima has pleased me and whoever angers Fatima has angered me?' They answered in the affirmative: 'Surely, we have heard him say that.

Then she raised her hands up and said with emotion: *'I call God and His angels to witness that you have angered me, you did not please me. When I meet God's Apostle (s), I will surely complain to him against you.'*

Then she turned towards Abu Bakr and said to him: *"I swear by God, I will curse you in all my prayers."*[1]

These words were so terrible that strokes with the swords would have been milder. They sent the two men staggering from the horror of what they met and they left the house in utter failure. They could not earn the pleasure of the Apostle's daughter (‘a); on the contrary, they realized how much resentment they had caused her and how much wrath they had fallen into.

Indeed, Fatima (‘a) bore the worst indignation against the man who had occupied her father's position. When some Ansar Ladies paid her a visit

1- Balaghat al-Nisa’, 12-19; A'lam al-Nisa’, 3:1208.

when she fell sick and asked her: 'How is your condition today, O daughter of God's Apostle?' she answered in an aggrieved tone: "By God I loathe this world of yours, I dislike your men. I have dismissed them after I have tested them. I hate them after I have examined them. Woe unto the bluntness of the swords; the weakness, or even breaking of the spears; and foolish opinion, and evil is what they have sent ahead for their souls, as God is displeased with them and they shall remain in punishment for ever. Certainly, the world has put its noose round their necks and raided them and away with the wrongdoing lot!

'Woe unto you! How did they tear it off (i.e. the succession) from the anchors of the message; the pillars of prophethood, the descending place of the trustworthy angel [i.e. Gabriel], a place that is well-acquainted with both worldly and religious affairs? Indeed, that is the manifest loss. What do they detest Abu al-Hasan (Imam Ali) for? By God, they detested the repugnance of his sword, his vehemence, the warning example set by his combat and his fury for God's sake. By God, had they left with him the reins which the Apostle of God (s) had handed him, he would have handled it well and led them along gently, and no one would have been hurt. He would have led them to the thirst-quenching watering place which overflows its sides. He would have led them out with full stomachs and acted sincerely towards them both openly and secretly. He would not have availed himself of [their world] except as much as would quench the thirst of the thirsty and alleviate the hunger of the hungry, and both earthly and heavenly blessings would have been opened up for them. God will hold them responsible for what they have been earning for themselves. Look! Come and listen! How odd this is! If you consider anything odd then this is really odd. Look at where they took refuge and which hand-hold they have held, surely, an evil ally and an evil companion. How evil a substitute for the wrongdoers! By God, they have sought to replace the leading ones with the followers, and the stout with the weak? They suppose they are doing good, but they are themselves the agents of corruption, but they are not aware. Woe unto them! 'Is He who guides to the truth worthier to be followed or he who guides not unless he is [himself] guided? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?'[1] I swear by God, damage has been done, What remains is only its consequences.

1- *Surah Yunes, 10:35.*

Then you shall see [a situation whereby] blood [will be spilled] and [people will be mad to partake of] bitter poisoned food, it is thence that the falsifiers become losers and come to know the outcome of what the earlier ones had started. Renounce yourselves willingly and be rest assured of imminent tribulation; expect a sharp sword that will cover you with wounds, and then your income will become only a pittance and your group will be mown down. What a loss is [awaiting] you! 'Shall we force it upon you while you are averse to it?'[1]

I do not know of any protest as severe as this one, in which the Apostle's beloved daughter condemned the oath of fealty to Abu Bakr and by which the veil had been drawn between the caliphate and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) who were the source of awareness and inspiration for the Arab and Muslim world.

The daughter of God's Apostle (‘a) had mentioned the reasons why the people refused to accept the Commander of the faithful (‘a). One was the danger of his sword by which he killed the Quraishi polytheists who stood in the way of the Islamic message. Another reason for the grudges the Quraysh harbored for the Imam (‘a) was his sternness in the face of the unbelievers and the hypocrites for whom he meant death; the Imam (‘a) never compromised with them. He declared: 'I will drag the unjust by the nose-ring till I bring him back to the truth even if he is averse.'

Imam Ali (‘a) had indeed unleashed his fury for the sake of God and he devoted all his energies to uphold His religion; he embarked boldly on the hardships of wars till Islam became strong and self-sustaining.

Fatima al-Zahra (‘a) has made mention of some very important issues in her protest which we discussed in our book *Hayat al-Imam al-Hasan (‘a)*. In any case, the Prophet's daughter (‘a) condemned Abu Bakr's government and remained angry with him to the last. When her death became imminent she made her [father's] cousin the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), her husband promise to inter her pure remains in the darkness of the night and not to allow Abu Bakr and his party to attend her funeral. She also requested the Imam (‘a) to obliterate her

1- Balaghat al-Nisa, 23; A'lam al-Nisa’, 3:1219; also see al-Tabrasi's al-Ihtijaj, Bihar al-Anwar and Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah.

grave so that the fact that it is unknown may be a testimony of her anger and resentment toward those people, and he carried out all her wishes.[1]

Imam al-Hasan (‘a)

Imam al-Hasan (‘a) who was then still a child also objected to Abu bakr's assumption of the caliphate which was his father's right. al-Hasan (‘a) entered the mosque together with his father Ali (‘a) while Abu Bakr was on the pulpit. al-Hasan (‘a) cried: *'Come down. Come down my father's pulpit and go to your father's.'*

Abu Bakr became confounded and the people who were present turned their gaze to the beloved grandson of God's Apostle (s) in perplexity. However, Abu Bakr soon regained his composure and tried to put things in order; he softly addressed al-Hasan (‘a), saying: 'You are right. By God, it is your father's pulpit, not my father's'[2]

Imam al-Hasan (‘a) used to see his grandfather, the Apostle of God (s) go up the venerated pulpit to invite the people to God's religion and guide them to the right way; and he saw that no one deserved to climb that pulpit after his grandfather except his father, the standard bearer of wisdom and justice of the entire Islamic world.

Protests by Distinguished Companions

Distinguished Companions of the Prophet and Islam's Leaders also objected to Abu Bakr occupying the centre of power and thereby depriving the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) of it. Some of them are:

1- The commentators on Sahih al-Bukhari mentioned this, vol. 8, pg: 157; In al-Hakim's al-Mustadrak, 3:162 it is reported that A'isha said: Ali buried Fatima the daughter of God's Apostle (s) at night without informing Abu Bakr. This report is also related in Ahmad's Musnad, 1: 6; Sahih Muslim, 2:72; Tarikh al-Tabari, 3:202; Sunan al-Bayhaqi, 6: 300; al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah in which is added: Fatima (‘a) remained angry with Abu Bakr throughout her life; Sirat al-Halabiyyah, 3:390; Ali (‘a) performed the funeral prayer and buried her at night without informing anyone.

2- Al-Riyad al-Nadirah 1:93; bin Abi al-Hadid's Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, 2:17; al-Khawarizmi's Maqtal al-Husayn 1:93; al-Manaqib 2:172; al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah 105; in al-Tibyan it is reported that al-Hasan (‘a) addressed Umar with the same words he addressed Abu Bakr.

1. Salman al-Farsi

Salman al-Farisi was that dutiful son of Islam who earned the attention of God's Apostle (s) to the extent that he included him among his Household. The Apostle of God (s) said: "Salman is one of us the *Ahl al-Bayt*. Do not say Salman al-Farisi, but Salman al-Muhammadi." He also declared that alms were forbidden to Salman just as they were forbidden to the *Ahl al-Bayt ('a)*. This great companion argued with Abu Bakr in these words:

'O Abu Bakr! If a situation concerning which you have no knowledge should arise to whom would you refer? To whom would you resort to if you are asked what you do not know? What is your excuse for forestalling him who is close to the Apostle of God (s) and more conversant with the interpretation of the book of God, the Mighty and Sublime, and the precepts (Sunnah) of His Prophet (s); who appointed him during his lifetime and enjoined you to obey just before his death? You disobeyed him and pretended to have forgotten his directives. You broke your promise and covenant and failed to honour the agreement which he concluded with you that you would turn up for the campaign under the leadership of Usamah bin Zayd…"[1]

Salman's argumentation covered the truth in all its ramifications. He had asked Abu Bakr to resign his post and turn it over to the one whom the Apostle of God (s) had appointed as his successor and leader of his community after him. This argument shows that, Shi'ism, in both the religious and political sense, started during the days of the Prophet (s).

2. Ammar bin Yasir

Ammar bin Yasir and his parents were among the people who were persecuted in the cause of Islam. His parents were martyred at the hands of a band of Quraysh unbelievers while Ammar escaped death. He was among the most distinguished companions of the Prophet (s) in terms of faith, self-abnegation and complete dedication to the truth. Ammar presented his argument in these words:

'O you Quraysh, you Muslims, Know that the Household of your Prophet ('a) are closest to him and most deserving of his legacy. They are more upright in religious matters and the believers would be safer

1- Al-Tabrasi's al-Ihtijaj, p. 100.

in their charge. They would preserve the religion better and would be more sincere to the Muslim community. Therefore, you should call upon your companion [i.e. Abu Bakr] to return the right to its rightful owners before the situation gets out of control; before your affair weakens and your disobedience ensues, in which case dissension will intensify and your disagreement will let your enemy have an eye on you.

'You know that the Hashimite family is more suited for this affair [i.e the leadership] than you are, and Ali (‘a) is closer to your Prophet (s) than you are. From among the Hashimites, Ali (‘a) is your master, by virtue of God's covenant and His Apostle's (s). You have seen his distinct position on several occasions: when the Prophet (s) closed all our houses' doors that opened into the mosque but left Ali's (‘a) door open; when he preferred marrying his beloved daughter Fatima (‘a) to Ali (‘a), although others had requested for her hand; when he said: 'I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate and whoever wants wisdom should come through its gate.' You all need him for whatever problem you encounter in matters of religion while he does not stand in need of anyone among you; among other merits of which the best among you cannot boast of.

'Then why do you turn away from Ali (‘a) and rob him of his right, and prefer the life of this world? How evil a substitute for the wrongdoers! Give him what God has made his own and do not turn away from him. Do not turn back on your heels and become losers.'[1]

Ammar's speech was a call for harmony and the good of the community. He called on Abu Bakr to resign the leadership in favour of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), who was the gate of the Prophet's (s) city of knowledge and conversant with the needs of the Muslim community in all fields.

3. Abu Dharr

Abu Dharr al-Ghifari was the voice of truth and justice in Islam. He was nourished on the Islamic spirit and understood its teachings and laws very well. He was the first person to rebel against Umayyad politics. This companion of the Prophet (s) also protested against the

1- Al-Tabrasi's al-Ihtijaj, p. 102.

people who distanced his Household (‘a) from the centre of authority. He addressed the Quraysh, saying:

'O you Quraysh, you have chosen ignominy and left aside the kinsmen of God's Apostle (s). I swear by God that a group of the Arabs will surely apostatize and have doubts about this religion. Should you allow the Household of your Prophet (‘a) hold the leadership not two people would be found to cross swords in this regard. By God, it has become the lot of the one with the upper hand and surely people who do not deserve will aspire to it and certainly much blood will be spilled in pursuing it.

"You know, as well as your outstanding men, that the Apostle of God (s) has said: The affair [i.e. the leadership] after me goes to Ali, then to my two [grand] sons Hasan and Husayn, and then to the pure ones from among my progeny. But you disregarded your Prophet's (s) word, pretending to forget his covenant. You have chosen the fleeting world instead of the everlasting hereafter in which the young shall not grow old, its blessings shall neither suffer grief nor die. Likewise, nations before you have apostatized after their Prophets had left them; they regressed and changed what their Prophets had brought them. Your actions are similar to theirs in every respect. You will soon taste the evil consequences of what you do; you will meet the requital for the deeds you have done and God is not tyrannical to His servants."[1]

The speech of this great revolutionary Abu Dharr prophesied the catastrophes that awaited the Muslim community, because of divesting the *Ahl al-Bayt* of leadership. Indeed, streams of blood have flown in the wake of contests for power till the leadership of the Muslims fell into the hands of the wicked Umayyads and Abbasids, who wreaked havoc in the land, spent Muslims' funds on pleasure and licentiousness, and suppressed all the reform movement that emerged in the Islamic world at that time. They were especially ruthless towards the Prophet's (s) kinsmen whom they sought to annihilate totally.

In any case, Abu Dharr's speech proves that he had understood the truth and his chief concern was the nation's general good and the dispensation of justice. Abu Dharr's insistence on Ali's right as the

1- Al-Tabrasi's al-Ihtijaj.

successor to the Prophet (s) shows that Shi'ism originated during the days of the holy Prophet (s).

4. al-Miqdad

Al-Miqdad was among the closest companions of Imam Ali (‘a) who thrived on his deep loyalty to him. He was one of those who were angry with Abu Bakr for his assumption of authority. al-Miqdad addressed him thus:

'O Abu Bakr! Desist from your injustice and repent. Keep to your house and weep for your sins and leave the leadership to whom it is due, he who is more deserving of it than you. Surely, you are aware of the duty of paying allegiance to him, with which the Apostle of God (s) has enjoined you when he commanded you to go for the military expedition under the command of Usamah bin Zayd, his freed slave. The Prophet (s) had also alluded to the fact that the leadership cannot be yours or your companion's when he associated both of you with him who supported you for it, the leader of hypocrisy and springhead of disobedience, Amr bin al-As. Concerning him, God sent down this verse to His Prophet (s): 'Indeed, it is your enemy who is without posterity.'

'Fear God, and resign right away before it is too late, for that is safer for you both in this world and after your death. Do not rely on your worldly position and let not the Quraysh or any one else deceive you, because soon your position will vanish, then you will return to your Lord who will requite you for your deeds. You know with certainty, that Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) is the rightful successor to the Apostle of God (s), so give back the leadership to him, since God has made it his right. This is the best cover for you and the best alleviation of your burden. By God, I have advised you, if only you will accept my counsel, and it is to God that all matters are returned.'[1]

Had those people listened to al-Miqdad's sincere call, the Muslim community would not have been beset by differences and disintegration.

1- Al-Tabrasi's al-Ihtijaj, 1:101.

5. Buraydah al-Aslami

Buraydah al-Aslami[1] also believed in the Commander of the Faithful's (‘a) right and criticized Abu Bakr in these words:

'Indeed, we belong to God and to Him do we return! What misfortune the truth has been subjected to at the hands of falsehood! O Abu Bakr! Have you forgotten or pretend to forget? Have you been deceived or have you deceived yourself? Have you been seduced by vanities? Do you not remember what the Prophet (s) commanded us while he was still in our midst, that we should call Ali the Commander of the Faithful (‘a); saying at different times, 'This is Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, the one who will kill the unjust people (*al-qasitun*)? Fear God, and correct yourself, before it is too late. Deliver yourself of that which ruins, and give back the affair [i.e. the authority] to him who deserves it more than you. Do not persist in your usurpation of authority and repent while you are still able to do so. Indeed I have given you my unreserved advice and shown you the way of salvation.'[2]

This speech contains some of the narrations reported from the Prophet (s) concerning the Commander of the Faithful's (‘a) merits and the fact that he had more right to the succession than all else.

6. Ubay bin Ka'b

Ubay bin Ka'b,[3] one of the most outstanding companions of the Prophet (s) and a trustworthy pious man also censured Abu Bakr and

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1- Buraydah bin al-Husayb al-Aslami embraced Islam before the battle of Badr but he did not participate in it. Al-Aslami took part in the battle of Khaybar and the campaign for the liberation of Mecca. The Prophet (s) appointed him as zakat-collector for his people. Al-Aslami lived in Medina from which he shifted to Basra and then to Marv where he died. He related the hadith from the Prophet (s) and a number of people related from him. Bin Sa'ad says that he died in 63 A.H (Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, 1:432).

2- Al-Tabrasi's al-Ihtijaj.

3- Ubay bin Ka'b al-Ansari al-Najjari, master of Qur'anic reciters was among those companions who concluded the second pact of al-Aqabah with the Prophet (s). He took part in the battle of Badr and all other battles fought by the Prophet (s). Ubay was among the people who wrote down the Qur'anic revelation and the Prophet's (s) letters. One day the Prophet (s) said to Ubay: O Abu Mundhir which verse of God's book do you consider the greatest? He

called on him to relinquish the leadership in favour of Imam Ali (‘a). Here is what he said:

'O Abu Bakr, do not deny a right God has bestowed on someone else, do not be the first person to disobey the Apostle of God (s) with regard to his testamentary legatee and chosen one [i.e. Imam Ali (‘a)]. Restore this right to its owner so that you may be saved. Do not persist in transgression lest you regret it. Make haste and repent so that your sins may be mitigated. Do not claim this affair [i.e. the leadership] which God has not given you lest you meet the evil consequences of your deeds, for soon you will leave the position you are occupying and return to your Lord and He shall question you about your crime, and your Lord is not tyrannical to His servants.'[1]

The speech calls for total reform and reconciliation that could have saved the Muslim nation all those crises, if only those people had listened.

7. Khuzaymah bin Thabit

Khuzaymah bin Thabit[2] was one of the foremost Islamic combatants among the Apostle of God's (s) companions, and a trustworthy and distinguished person. bin Thabit also criticized Abu Bakr and his supporters for barring the Prophet's progeny (‘a) from the centre of power. He said:

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replied: 'God – there is no god except Him….' Then the Prophet (s) tapped his chest and said to him: 'O Abu al-Mundhir.' He was among the learned Companions. The Prophet (s) said concerning Ubay: The best recite [of the Qur'an] among my community is Ubay.' Umar bin al-Khattab used to call him the master of the Muslims. Ubay died in 39 A.H during the rule of Uthman bin Affan al-Isabah, 1:3-32.

1- Al-Tabrasi's al-Ihtijaj, 1: 102.

2- Khuzaymah bin Thabit, from the tribe of Aws was known as the one with the two testimonies (Dhu al-Shahadatayn) because the Apostle of God (s) considered his testimony to be equivalent to the testimony of two men. He bore the agnomen Abu Abbad. He took part in the battle of Badr and subsequent battles. He accompanied Imam Ali (s) in the battle of Siffin and when Ammar was killed, Khuzaymah drew his sword and fought until he was killed. He used to say: I heard the Apostle of God (s) saying: 'The unjust group will kill Ammar.' -Al-Isti'ab.

'O you people! Are you not aware that the Apostle of God (s) accepts my testimony even without another person supporting it?' When they answered in the affirmative, he added: 'I testify that I have heard God's Apostle (s) saying: 'My Household separates truth from falsehood, they are the Imams [i.e. leaders] who should be followed', and I have said what I know and the duty of the messenger is only to communicate in clear terms.'

This speech calls on the people to hold fast to the pure Progeny (‘a) from which God has repelled all impurity and purified with a thorough purification, and to restore the leadership to them.

8. Abu al-Haytham

Among the people who criticized Abu Bakr was Abu al-Haytham[1] bin al-Tihan one of the distinguished companions in terms of faith, doctrine and loyalty to the Commander of the Faithful (‘a). He says:

'I bear witness that our Prophet (s) appointed Ali (‘a)[2] [as his successor]. Some of the Ansar said: 'He did not appoint him as successor,' and others said: 'He did not appoint him except to let the people know that he was master to whomever the Apostle of God (s) was master.' The argument on the matter became prolonged so we sent some of our men to God's Apostle (s) to ask him about it. He said to them: 'Tell your people that Ali is the master of the believers after me,

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1- His name was Malik and he was from the tribe of al-Aws. He was among the ssix men who concluded the first and second pacts of al-Aqabah with the Apostle of God (s), and the first to pay allegiance to him. Abu al-Haytham was the chief of the Banu Abd al-Ashhal clan. He participated in the battle of Badr and all subsequent battles the Prophet (s) fought. (Usd al-Ghabah, 4: 274).
Abu al-Haytham was a sincere disciple of Imam Ali (s). He was martyred in siffin in the year 37 A.H. In one of his sermons, the Imam (s) mentioned him with grief, saying: 'Where are my brothers who took the path of truth and persisted on it: where are Ammar, bin al-Tihan, Dhu al-Shahadatayn and their likes?' And then he held his noble beard and wept bitterly For that elect group of people who had taken the path of truth and recognized the Imam's (s) position.
2- He was alluding to the story of Ghadir in which the Apostle of God (s) appointed Ali the Commander of the Faithful (s) as his successor.

the one who will, of all the people, act most sincerely towards my community.'

'I have given testimony from what I can remember, so let anyone who wishes believe it and let anyone who wishes disbelieve it, indeed the Day of Judgment is the appointed time.'[1]

This speech states clearly that the Apostle of God (s) had indeed appointed the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) as his successor thereby entrusting the position of Caliphate and Imamate to him. It is on this basis that the doctrine of the Imamiyyah Shi'ah is founded.

9. Sahl bin Hunayf

Sahl bin Hunayf[2] was among the vanguard of the Prophet's (s) companions, both in term of believing in his message and fighting in defense of Islam. bin Hunyf had reproached the Qurayshites because they unanimously acted in barring the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) from the caliphate. He addressed them, saying:

'O you Qurayshites, bear witness that I testify that I have seen the Apostle of God (s) in this place (i.e. his holy mosque) holding up the hand of Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) and saying: 'O you people! This is Ali your Imam [i.e. leader] after me, my testamentary legatee (*wasi*) both during my lifetime and after my death, the one who will repay my debt and fulfill my obligations, and the first person to shake hands with me at my pond [in the hereafter]. Happy is the one who follows him and woe unto the one who stays behind and forsakes him.'[3]

These words recount one of the Prophet's (s) speeches in which he declared that Imam Ali (‘a) was his successor.

1- Al-Tabrasi's al-Ihtijaj, 1: 103.

2- Abu Thabit Sahl bin Hunayf al-Awsi al-Ansari: He took part in the battle of Badr and all other encounters. He persevered together with God's Apostle (s) on the day of the battle of Uhud, for he had paid allegiance to him, promising to defend him with his life. Bin Hunayf was a follower of the Commander of the Faithful (s.) for whom he was governor of Basra.He supported him in the battle of Siffin and later the Imam (s) appointed him governor of Persia. Bin Hunayf died in 38 A.H. and the Imam (s) led his funeral prayer.-(Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, 4:428).

3- Al Tabrasi's al-Ihtijaj 1:102.

10. Uthman bin Hunayf[1]

Uthman bin Hunayf, one of the best companions of God's Apostle (s) also rebuked Abu Bakr for assuming the caliphate. He said: 'We have heard the Apostle of God (s) saying: 'My Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) are the stars on earth so do not precede them, instead, you should give them preference [for the leadership] because they are the leaders after me.' Then a man stood up and said: 'O Apostle of God! Who among your household [do you mean]?' 'Ali and the pure ones from his descendants,' he replied. Thus, the Prophet (s) stated the matter clearly, so do not be the first to disbelieve it, O Abu Bakr! Do not betray God and the Apostle (s), and do not betray your trusts knowingly.'

This speech calls the people to the truth and tries to safeguard the community from discord. However, political ambitions prevented the people from listening.

11. Abu Ayyub al-Ansari[2]

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari believed that the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) was more entitled to the caliphate than anyone else. This man also censured Abu Bakr and his party, saying:

1- Uthman bin Hunayf al-Ansari al-Awsi had taken part in Uhud and all later battles fought by the Prophet (s.).Umar bin al-Khattab appointed him as administrator of the Sawad region of Iraq where he conducted a land survey of both the cultivated and uncultivated areas of it, and fixed its land taxes. Imam Ali (s.) also appointed bin Hunaynf lived till the time of Mu'awiya's rule before he died.-Usd al-Ghabah, 3:376.

2- His name was Zayd bin Khalid al-Khazraji. He witnessed the pact of al-Aqabah, the battle of Badr and other campaigns. When the Prophet (s.) migrated to Medina he lodged with Abu Ayyub. He participated in all Imam Ali's (s) wars and during the battle of al-Nahrawan, Abu Ayyub was the one who held the banner of amnesty under which gathered those who left the Kharijites' camp and joined the Imam's (s). He made beautiful war compositions in which he urged the people to support the Imam (s).
One day Abu Ayyub's father Khalid called on the Apostle of God (s.) and said to him: O Apostle of God advise me.' 'I advise you on five things,' he replied, 'to despair of what is in people's hands, because that is to be needless, beware of greed for that is present destitution, perform your prayers as though you were bidding farewell, beware of what you would have to apologise for, and love for your brother what you would love for yourself.' Abu Ayyub died in

'O servants of God, fear God with regard to your Prophet's household (‘a) and restore to them their right which God has ordained for them, for you have heard what our brethren have heard from our Prophet (s) when he said at different occasions: 'My household are your (leaders) Imams after me,' and, pointing to Ali (‘a), he said: 'This is the Commander of the Pious, killer of the infidels. Whoever forsakes him is forsaken [by God] and whoever supports him is supported [by him].' Return to God and repent of your [wrong] deeds, indeed God is All-clement, All-merciful. Do not turn on your heels; do not turn away from him in disregard.'[1]

These are the arguments which the companions, who were concerned for their religion, presented in support of the Commander of the Faithful's (‘a) right to succeed the Prophet (s). However, the terrible events of Al Saqifah caused the great schism that beset Muslims throughout history. Intra-Muslim discord did not start during the rule of Uthman or Ali (‘a), contrary to what the dean of Arabic literature Dr. Taha Husayn asserted in his book al-*Fitnat al-Kubra*.

The Shi'ah have carried out a careful and holistic study of the reports in which the Prophet (s) has mentioned his kinsmen in glorious terms; extolled his cousin Ali (‘a) the Commander of the Faithful; described him as having a position with the Prophet (s) similar to Aaron's position with Moses; proclaimed he was the master of every believer man and woman, after him. As a result, they have held a firm belief that he was the legitimate direct successor to the great Prophet (s). The Shi'ah do not hold this doctrine out of mere imitation or sentiment; rather their beliefs are based on texts from the Qur'an and the Sunnah which they can in no way disregard.

Abominable Omissions

Barring the Prophet's household (‘a) from the succession has brought dreadful catastrophes and bitter trials on the Muslims, for it engendered differences and schisms within them and rendered them vulnerable to great mischief. The worst and most painful of all was that the Islamic

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Constantinople during the rule of Yazid bin Mu'awiya.-Kuna wa al-Alqab, 1:13.

1- Al-Tabrasi's al-Ihtijaj, 1:103.

caliphate had become a plaything in the hands of the Umayyads and their cousins, the Abbasids. They treated the public treasury and the people as their chattels and spent Muslims' funds on pleasures and licentiousness, in total disregard of God's covenants. They hounded the reformers, the Alids and their partisans, who were severely tortured and killed.

This is Shaykh Radi Al Yasin's view on the painful misadventures that befell the Muslims in the wake of usurping the caliphate from the *Ahl al-Bayt:* "Usurping the caliphate form the Prophet's (s) kinsmen was the cause of conflict between power-lovers of every generation, the origin of shocking tragedies that Muslims suffered, and the source of most contemptible relapses from the Islamic ideal. Muslims would have been free of such a situation, had the issue of leadership been allowed to take its natural course without the interference of politics or personal predilections, and only the word of God and His Apostle (s) held sway.

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا﴾

"A faithful man or woman may not have any option when God and His Apostle have decided on a matter, and whoever disobeys God and His Apostle has certainly strayed into manifest error."[1]

"The long drawn conflicts between prominent families in the early Islamic period, which later generations inherited, were nothing but the outcome of leaving the door open for those ambitious people whose target was the eminent position of the caliphate. Those horrible massacres which the Muslims had to suffer at different periods of their history, such as the conflicts between the Umayyads and the Hashimites, the Zubayrites and the Umayyads, the Abbasids and the Umayyads and the Alids and the Abbasids, were the direct result of undermining the religious convention which the Prophet of God (s) introduced in order to prevent these tragedies and regrettable incidents.

Likewise, the calamities that befell the unique progeny of the Prophet (s) the crucifixion, the captivity, the banishment, all stemmed

1- *Sureh Ahzab, 33:36.*

from the first disobedience of the Prophet's (s) policy. If they had obeyed his will and followed the plans he had for safeguarding his kinsmen and the entire ummah, those atrocities would not have taken place.

However, the people were ignorant of the implications of that far-sighted policy. They disliked that prophethood and the caliphate should come from one house.[1] This was their apparent excuse, apart from which they could not gather anything to tell the people. No one knew their secret reason for diverting the caliphate from the Prophet's Household (‘a) except God. He knows the hidden side of things. But most probably it was nothing but the reminiscences of the bloody wars that Islam fought to defend its cause, or sheer jealousy which 'eats up religion as fire consumes wood.'

'Infatuation with position and desire for authority are the most dangerous diseases that impair the innate natures of leaders or pseudo-leaders. Neither Prophethood nor Imamate, which are divine offices, lie within the purview of politics in the narrow sense of the term. All political aspects of Prophethood or its administrative appendages are part and parcel of religion, and the only authority with the final say on all such matters was the communicator of this religion himself.'[2]

This view of his eminence, Shaykh al Yasin is indeed very solid because the great upheavals which afflicted the ummah were a direct result of diverting the caliphate from the Prophet's household (‘a), the source of wisdom. Had the ummah obeyed the Apostle of God (s) and followed what he planned for it, which was the most progressive plan ever, i.e. placing the reigns of leadership in the hands of those talented people who abstained from all forms of sin, the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a),* who preferred the common good of the community above all else. Had they complied with the commands of the Apostle (s) they would not have been afflicted with rulers like Mu'awiya, Yazid, Umayyad and Abbasid kings, who made chattels out of God's servants and His treasures and

1- Prominent Qurayshi families claimed that the prophethood and the caliphate would not co-exist in one family. They proclaimed this as their motto and did all they could to divert the caliphate away from the Ahl al Bayt (‘a.).
2- Sulh al-Hasan (‘a), p. 28-29.

diverted the ummah's economy to serve their desires, whims and vanity.

SHI'AH AND THE COMPANIONS

The Shi'ah have been charged with disparaging the Prophet's companions (*sahabah*) and questioning their probity, but this is sheer calumny. In fact, the Shi'ah venerate the companions of the Prophet (s) and have great respect for them. They believe that all Muslims are beholden to them, because they were the people who supported Islam during its difficult days, and without their efforts and sacrifices Islam would not have been firmly established. Here we will say a word concerning the position of the Shi'ah with respect to the companions.

Definition of 'companion'

The extolled *companions* are those who accompanied the Prophet (s) believing in him, and died following his religion and guidance, and not all the people who saw the Prophet **(s).** To consider all those who saw the Prophet (s) as *companions* would have been too simplistic, and, in that case, children and non-believers would have been included, although they could well be left out. On the other hand, if we consider seeing the Prophet (s) a criterion, some companions would have been left out, people like the blind man bin Ummu Maktum, who were excellent believers, religiously conscious, included in any definition of *companion*.

Our own definition does not include the hypocrites who were conspiring against Islam and were all the time seeking ways to wreak havoc, those about whom the chapter of al-Munafiqun (the Hypocrites) was revealed as part of the Qur'an.

Judging the Companions

The Prophet's (s) companions have a noble station in the sight of God the Exalted, however, companionship per se does not confer infallibility, nor does it grant salvation from hellfire, unless accompanied by good deeds and abstaining from what God has forbidden. This is God's criterion. So, 'whoever refrains from sin,

believes, follows the guidance and does good, paradise will be his abode,' and 'whoever transgresses and deviates from the truth after the guidance has become clear to him, his end will be the fire.' This is Islam's verdict. God the Exalted has said:

﴿وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى ۞ وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَى﴾

"And that nothing belongs to man except what he strives for, and that he will soon be shown his endeavour."[1]

And:

﴿وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ﴾

"And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it."[2]

God the Exalted has tied His reward to good deeds and His punishment to evil ones, and this rule applies to the companions as well. Whoever complies with God's will receives his reward and more, while he who leaves the truths receives double punishment for disregarding the Sunnah (precedent) of the Apostle of God (s) and deviating from his guidance.

From the Qur'an

When we turn to the holy Qur'an to see how it treats the companions of the Prophet (s), we find two groups of verses:

First Group: This group of verses highly commends those companions who were sincere to God, strove for His sake and had the highest levels of faith. Here are some of them:

1- God the Exalted has said:

﴿لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا﴾

"God was certainly pleased with the faithful when they swore allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, so

1- *Surah al-Najm, 53:39-40.*
2- *Surah al- Zelzel, 99:8.*

He sent down composure on them and requited them with a victory near at hand."[1]

﴿مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى عَلَى سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾

2- *"Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless and merciful amongst themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in worship], seeking God's grace and [His] pleasure. Their mark is [visible] on their faces, from the effect of prostration. Such is their description in the Torah and their description in the Evangel. Like a tillage that sends out its shoots and builds them up and they grow stout and settle on their stalks, impressing the planters, so that He may enrage the faithless by them. God has promised those of them who have faith and do righteous deeds, forgiveness and a great reward."*[2]

﴿وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتَهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ﴾

3- *"The early vanguard of the emigrants and the Ansar and those who followed them in virtue - God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them forever. That is the great success."*[3]

These verses of the Qur'an describe the high position of those companions and their lofty station with God, the Exalted. God's praise for them has made them needless of more praise. *It is these people that every Muslim is duty bound to sincerely love.*

1- *Surah al-fath, 48:18.*
2- *Surah al-fath, 48:29.*
3- *Surah at-Tawba, 9:100.*

Second group: This consists of the verses which criticize those companions who were steeped in hypocrisy, who sought to cause sedition. They proclaimed Islam with their tongues while their hearts harboured disbelief in God.

Here are some of those verses:

﴿وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنَافِقُونَ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ مَرَدُوا عَلَى النِّفَاقِ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

1- *"There are hypocrites among the Bedouins around you, and among the townspeople of Medina, they are steeped in hypocrisy. You do not know them. We know them, and We will punish them twice, then they shall be consigned to a great punishment."*[1]

﴿وَمِنْهُمُ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ أُذُنٌ﴾

2- *"Among them are those who torment the Prophet, and say, 'He is an ear'"*[2]

﴿إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ ۞ اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ۞ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا فَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ﴾

3- *"When the hypocrites come to you they say,' We bear witness that you are indeed the Apostle of God.'God knows that you are His Apostle, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are liars. They make a shield of their oaths and bar from the way of God. Evil indeed is what they used to do. That is because they believed and then disbelieved, so their hearts were sealed. Hence they do not understand."*[3]

The verses we have cited above show that *some companions of the Prophet* **(s)** *were saintly souls who loved God and were most sincere to Him***,** and strove for His sake to their utmost. *Others were annoying the Prophet (s) by doing and saying what he disliked.* Those were

1- *Surah at-Tawba, 9:101.*
2- *Surah at-Tawba, 9:61.*
3- *Surah al-Munafiqun, 63:1-3.*

enemies of God and opponents of His Apostle (s); they were steeped in hypocrisy, having shed away their garments of faith. Without doubt, *it is not permissible to venerate these people nor does the reverence due to the companions include them.* This is the Shi'ah belief.

From the Sunnah (Prophetic Tradtions)

A number of Prophetic hadiths have declared that some companions have reneged on their faith. Some of them are:

1- Al Tirmidhi has reported that the Prophet (s) has said; [On the Day of Judgement] some men among my companions will be dragged to the right and to the left, then I will say: 'My Lord! [They are] my companions.' Then it will be said: You do not know what innovation they have introduced after you; they did not cease reneging since you left them.' Then I will say, as the righteous servant [of God] said: 'If You punish them, they are indeed Your creatures.'[1]

2- Ahmad bin Hanbal reports in his *Musnad*, from Abdullah bin Mas'ud, from the Prophet (s) who said to his companions: "I will precede you to the Pond and [there] I will attempt to free some people [who are to be punished] but I will be overcome. Then I will say: 'My Lord! [They are] my companions.' Then He will say: 'You do not know what innovation they introduced after you."[2]

3- Muslim has reported that the Prophet (s) has said: "I will be by the Pond waiting for the people among you who will enter it. I swear by God that some men shall be separated and then I will say: O my Lord…"[3]

4- Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a.) has reported through his chain of transmission that his forefather, the Apostle of God (s), has said: "A band of my companions will come to me at the Pond but they will be debarred from it. Then I will say: 'My Lord! [They are] my

1- Sahih al-Tirmdhi, 2:68.
2- Ahmad bin Hanbal's al-Musnad, 5: 231.
3- Sahih Muslim 4:65.

companions. Then it will be said: 'You do not know what innovation they introduced after you; they have reneged and retreated.'"[1]

Many such hadiths have been transmitted from the Prophet (s) and they clearly show that, among the companions, there were perverted elements who chose this world above the hereafter. God had set a seal on their hearts and they followed their own desires.

Hypocrites and Renegades

Hadith narrators have mentioned a group of people who were among the Prophet's (s) companions but they had reneged on their religion and no faith or fear of God remained in them. Some of them were:

1. Al-Walid bin Uqbah

God the Exalted has called al-Walid bin Uqbah bin Abi Mu'it a sinner. This was when the Prophet (s) sent him to collect *zakat* from the tribe of Banu al-Mustaliq. al-Walid returned and told the Prophet (s) that the people had come out to fight him. The Prophet (s) was intent on mobilizing an army in order to fight them when God the Exalted sent down this verse:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آَمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَإٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ﴾

"O you who have faith! If a profligate [person] should bring you some news verify it, lest you should visit harm on some people out of ignorance."[2-3]

2. Khadhdham and his group

Among the hypocrites and the misguided were Khadhdham bin Khalid, Mu'tab bin Qushayr, Abu Habibah bin Ali al-Az'ar and their group. They were the people who built a mosque pretending to pray there at times they could not attend the prayer with the holy Prophet (s). However, God exposed them by sending down this verse concerning their affair:

1- Hayat al-Imam Muhammad al-Baqir 2:117; as quoted from Sahih al-Bukhari 8:150.
2- *Surah al-Hojarat, 49:6.*
3- Tafsir bin Kathir 4: 212.

﴿وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَإِرْصَادًا لِمَنْ حَارَبَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَيَحْلِفُنَّ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْحُسْنَى وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ﴾

"As for those who took a mosque for sabotage and for defiance, and to cause division among the faithful, and for the purpose of ambush, [used] by those who fought God and His Apostle before. They swear: 'We desired nothing but good', and God bears witness that they are indeed liars."[1]

This verse has exposed them and the falsity of their claim.[2]

3. Dhu al-Thadyah

He was among those people whom had seen the holy Prophet (s). He used to affect an air of piety but his worship was not done out of true knowledge of God and faith. Knowing that this man was deviated, the Prophet (s) ordered that he should be executed. At first Abu Bakr went to kill him but, having found him in a state of prayer, he stopped. Then Umar rushed to him but he too could not execute the Prophet's order. Then Imam Ali (‘a) hastened to kill the man but he did not find him.[3] Dhu al-Thadyah was the one who led the Kharijites on the day of al-Nahrawan and it was then that the Imam (‘a) killed him.

4. Al-Hakam bin Abi al-As

He was a wicked and very offensive man who was among the leaders of the hypocrites. He was one of the most malicious arch-enemies of the Apostle of God (s). One day he was walking behind him, imitating, winking and twitching his nose and mouth at him.[4] The Prophet (s) turned round and saw him doing that and said: 'Be like that.' As a result, al-Hakam was inflicted by a quivering of the body and remained in that condition till he died.

Al-Hakam used to hold back people from embracing Islam. Marwan [ibn al-Hakam] once said to Huwaytib: 'Old man! You became Muslim rather late, when events had overtaken you.' 'I swear by God, replied

1- *Surah a-Tawbah, 9:107.*
2- Sirat bin Hisham 1:241.
3- Al-Isabah 1:429.
4- Ansab al-Ashraf 5:27.

Huwaytib, I intended to accept Islam on several occasions but your father stopped me. He used to tell me: 'Will you forfeit your honour, leave the religion of your forefathers and follow that of this upstart, and therefore become a mere follower?"[1]

One day al-Hakam sought permission to see the Apostle of God (s), upon which he said: 'Allow him in, may God curse him and his offspring, except the faithful among them, and few indeed will they be for they are a deceptive and treacherous lot. They will be given this world but they will have no share of the hereafter.'[2]

The Prophet (s) banished al-Hakam to al-Ta'if and he did not allow him into his capital city. This filthy man is also counted among the companions!

5. Quzman bin al-Harth

He took part in the battle of Uhud together with the Prophet (s) and fought like a hero but the Prophet (s) said that he was one of the denizens of hellfire. Quzman fell down wounded, and when it was said to him: 'Congratulations for attaining the garden of paradise, O Abu al-Ghaydaq!' He derided the speaker saying: 'A garden of rue (a perennial evergreen shrub having bitter leaves)? By God we did not fight but for the sake of [our] noble descent.'[3] Can this man be counted as one of the companions?

6. Abu Sufyan

He was the arch foe of the Apostle of God (s) and harboured the worst hatred for him. He laboured hard to drown the call of Monotheism, to bring down the banner of Islam and to put out God's light. He mobilized forces and led one army after another in Badr, Uhud and other battles. However, God turned all his plots against him, destroyed his armies, crushed his hostility and granted victory to the Prophet (s). All Abu Sufyan's efforts came to naught, and Islam gained the upper hand and hoisted its standard aloft. Mecca, which had been the stronghold of the Quraysh tribes which were hostile to God, which inflicted untold hardships on His Apostle (s), was finally vanquished. But for the

1- Tarikh bin Kathir 8:70.
2- Al-Sirah al-Halabiyyah 1:337.
3- Al-Isabah 3:235.

Apostle of God's (s) overflowing mercy, their children would have been enslaved and their men put to the sword. However, he pardoned them and set them free, saying, 'Go, you are the freed ones'.

Among those pardoned by the Apostle (s) was Abu Sufyan who accepted Islam unwillingly so that his life might be spared, but his head was still full of the thoughts and paganism of the Age of Ignorance. He was the one who kicked Hamza's grave and said: 'The matter for the sake of which we were fighting has now fallen into the hands of our children. His blasphemous utterances clearly depicted his paganism and are well known, so, how can this man be counted as one of the companions?

7. Mu'awiya bin Abi Sufyan

He committed horrible crimes.He fought the testamentary legatee (*wasi*) of the Apostle of God (s) and Commander of the Faithful, Ali (‘a.), and killed his best followers, people like Hijr bin Adiyy, Maytham al-Tammar and his faithful colleagues.

Throughout the different periods of his lifetime, Mu'awiya did not, for a moment, believe in God. He was indeed one of the pillars of Jahiliyyah. He had made it a duty to vilify the Prophet's (s) pure progeny from the pulpits and the minarets. Indeed, Mu'awiya's crimes are uncountable. How can this cunning man who exhibited pre-Islamic tendencies be considered one of the companions?

8. Abu al-Adiyah al-Juhani

His first name was Yasar.He was one of those people who heard and narrated from the Prophet (s). Among the narrations he related from him: 'Indeed your blood and your property are inviolable.' He killed Ammar bin Yasir, that eminent companion to whom the Prophet (s) had said: 'O Ammar, an unjust group will kill you.' When Abu al-Adiyah wanted to see Mu'awiya he used to tell the chamberlain: Tell him Ammar's killer is by the gate.'[1] However it has been reported in the hadith that 'Were the entire inhabitants of the earth to kill Ammar, they would [all] have entered hellfire.'[2]

1- Usd al-Ghabah 5:267.
2- Ibid.

In any case, it is difficult to see how the likes of this mean criminal can be called companions and considered men of probity.

9. Qudmah bin Mad'un

This man was among the first group of people to embrace Islam.He had made the two migrations (i.e. to Abyssinia and to Medina). Umar bin al-Khattab had appointed him governor of Bahrain where he drank wine and Umar executed the prescribed punishment (*hadd*) on him. How then can he be considered upright just because he was said to be a companion?

These examples are sufficient to illustrate the conduct of those companions who had committed crimes against God, deviated from the straight path, violated the precepts and laws laid down by God's Apostle (s). How, in all honesty, can all the companions, without exception, be considered men of probity and uprightness?

Concocted Narrations

One of Mu'awiya's mortal sins was that he organized committees to fabricate narrations about the merits of the companions and to show that they were on a par with the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a.) These narrations which have been attributed to the Apostle of God (s) have unfortunately found their way into the hadith literature and have become part of Islamic doctrine, in spite of their apocryphal nature.

Here is a sample of such narrations:

> **1**- Bin Abbas narrates that the Apostle of God (s) has said:"Every tree in paradise has it written on all its leaves: There is no god except God and Muhammad is the Apostle of God, Abu Bakr the truthful, Umar the criterion of truth and falsehood (*al-Faruq*), Uthman, the possessor of the two lights."[1]

The renowned scholar Allama Amini has commented on this narration, saying: 'This hadith is among the fabrications of bin Jamil al-Ruqiyy. It has been recorded by al-Tabarani who said: 'It is a fabricated hadith.'

1- Tarikh Baghdad 4:5.

Then al-Amini mentioned other sources which declared that it was a fabrication.'[1]

> **2**- It has been reported through an incomplete chain of transmission (*al-maqtu'*) that Anas [ibn Malik] related that the Prophet (s) has said: "I would not miss anyone among my companions except Mu'awiya bin Abi Sufyan; I will not see him for eighty years (or seventy years) Then after eighty years (or seventy years) he will come to me riding a she-camel created from musk, its guts made of God's mercy and its legs made of chrysolite. I will call him: Mu'awiya, and he will answer me: At your service, O Muhammad. Then I will say: Where have you been all this eighty years? Then he will answer me: I was in a meadow beneath the throne of my Lord where He was holding a secret conversation with me and we have been exchanging greetings He was telling me: This is the recompense for the vilification you suffered in the world."

This hadith is among the fabrications of Abdullah bin Hafs al-Wakil. bin Adiyy remarks: 'I have no doubt that it was fabricated and Abdullah is its fabricator.' al-Khatib said: 'It is untrue in respect of both its chain of transmission and its text. bin Asakir says: 'This hadith is not recognized.'[2]

Why should the Prophet (s) miss Mu'awiya,while he was the one who fought his testamentary legatee and gate of his city of knowledge, forced his criminal son on the Muslims, as his successor? It is this type of ahadith that the ignorant people and the rabble invoke to prove the merits of Mu'awiya.

> **3**- Anas [ibn Malik] relates that the Prophet (s) has said: 'When I was taken for the night journey, I entered paradise and, behold, I saw myself before an apple which was hanging from [the neck] of a houri who said: 'I am for the unjustly-killed one, Uthman.'"

Al-Dhahabi has recorded it is his *Mizan al-I'tidal* (2:20) through Abbas bin Muhammad al-Adawi, the fabricator, and said: It is a fabricated report.

1- Allama al-Amini's al-Ghadir 5: 297.
2- Allama al-Amini's al-Ghadir 5:299.

4- It has been reported through an incomplete chain of transmission (*al-maqtu'*), from Abdullah bin Umar that the Prophet (s) has said:"When Abu Bakr was born God gazed at the garden of Eden and said 'I swear by my greatness and sublimity that I will not admit into you except those who love this new born child.' "

Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi comments on this hadith, saying: It is false and its chain of transmission includes a number of unknown narrators.[1]

5- It has been reported through an incomplete chain of transmission (*al-maqtu'*) that Abu Hurayrah has related that the Prophet (s) has said: "In the first heavens there are 80,000 angels seeking God's forgiveness for whoever loves Abu Bakr and Umar, and in the second heaven there are 80,000 who curse whoever hates Abu Bakr and Umar."

Al-Khatib says:"This narration has been fabricated by al-Adawi who narrated it to Kamil bin Talhah."[2]

6- It has been reported through an incomplete chain of transmission (*almaqtu'*) that al-Barra' has related that God has provided Abu Bakr in the highest station of paradise, a white sapphire dome which is suspended from the power [of God] and through which the winds of mercy blow. This dome has 4,000 doors and whenever Abu Bakr longs for God a door opens and he gazes at the Great and Sublime Lord.

His narration is among the fabrications of Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Ashnani. al-Dhahabi counts it among the disasters caused by al-Ashnani.[3]

7- It has been related from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (s) has said: When I was taken to the heavens, whenever I passed through a heaven I found written in it: Muhammad the Apostle of God and Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (i.e. the truthful).

1- Tarikh Baghdad 3: 309.
2- Allama al-Amini's al-Ghadir 5: 300.
3- Allama al-Amini's al-Ghadir 5: 301.

Ibn Hajar quotes this narration from bin Hibban and comments: This narration is baseless.[1]

8- Anas [ibn Malik] says: The Prophet (s) established the bond of brotherhood between Abu Bakr and Umar and then said to them: 'You are my ministers both in this and the next worlds. The likeness of me and the two of you in paradise is like that of a bird which flies therein, I being its breast and you its two wings. We shall move freely in paradise; we shall visit the Lord of creation; we shall attend parties in paradise.' Then they said: 'Will there be parties in paradise?' 'Yes', he replied,' there will be parties and amusement.' 'What shall be the amusement in paradise?' They asked. 'Reeds of canes made of red sulphur, the beads of which are made of fresh pearls. A breeze called 'the wholesome' will blow from beneath [one of the] legs of the Throne and stir those reeds, and they will let out a sound that will entertain the inhabitants of paradise for a time as long as the duration of the world and whatever was in it.'

This narration is among the fabrications of Zakariya bin Durayd al-Kindi. bin Hibban has recorded it and commented: 'It is a concoction, Zakariya being its problem.'[2]

9- It has been reported through an incomplete chain of transmission (*almaqtu'*) that Anas relates that the Prophet (s) has said: The trustworthy ones are seven: the Tablet, the Pen, Israfil, Mika'il, Gabriel, Muhammad and Mu'awiya.[3]

Ibn Kathir has mentioned this narration and counted it among the disagreeable ahadith.[4] Allama Amini's remark on it was: 'Woe unto a people who narrated such disgraceful things without a grain of shame. Is it not a shame for Islam and its adherents for the treacherous Mu'awiya to be made a peer of the Prophet (s) and God's trustworthy and infallible servants?'[5]

10- Zayd bin Thabit said that the Apostle of God (s) has said: 'Umar bin al-Khattab will be the first person to be given his book [of

1- Tahdhib al-Tahdhib 5:138.
2- Allama al-Amini's al-Ghadir 5: 303.
3- Al-Mizan 1:321.
4- Tarikh bin Kathir 8:120.
5- Allama al-Amini's al-Ghadir 5: 308.

accounts on the Day of Judgement] and he will be like the sun.' It is said: 'But where is Abu Bakr?' He said: 'The angels will escort him to the gardens [of paradise] with pomp.'[1]

11-Whenever the Prophet (s) longs for paradise he kisses the grey beard of Abu Bakr. Both al-Fyruzabadi, as recorded in the epilogue of his *Sifr al-Sa'adah*, and al-Ajluni, in *Kashf al-Khafa* (2:419), declared that this narration is among the most notorious fabrications whose falsity is known by mere instinct.[2]

Al-Amini (may God illuminate his tomb) has mentioned one hundred fabricated hadiths in his work al-*Ghadir*. It is worthy of note that Imam al-Baqir (‘a.) has raised the issue of fabricated hadiths while discussing with his leading companions and said that most of the narrations talking about the merits of the companions are fabrications which were concocted during Mu'awiya's rule and on his instruction, so as to diminish the position of the Alids. When Abban, a scholar who was among the students of the Imam requested him to mention some of those fabricated reports, the Imam cited the following:

A- 'The lords of the middle-aged inhabitants of paradise are Abu Bakr and Umar.'[3]

B- 'Umar was among the people to whom the angels spoke.'

C- 'Composure speaks through the tongue of Umar.'

D- 'Umar was inspired by the angel.'

E- 'The angels are bashful before Uthman.'[4]

1- In al-La'ali (1:156), al-Suyuti counted this narration among the fabricated hadiths.

2- Allama al-Amini's al-Ghadir 5: 317.

3- This narration has been fabricated to act as parallel to the widely-transmitted (mutawatir) hadith in which the Prophet (s.) said concerning his two grandsons (al-Hasan and al-Husayn -‘a-), the lords of the youths of paradise. This narration has been mentioned to Imam al-Jawad (s) who dismissed it, saying, there will be no middle-aged men in paradise; all its people are beardless young men.

4- For what reason should the angels be bashful before Uthman, the chief of the Umayyad family?

And Imam Abu Ja'far (‘a) went on listing more than a hundred-or more than two hundred-fabricated reports which the people took for true whereas they were outright lies.[1]

During the days of the Umayyads and the Abbasids many narrations were concocted about the merits of the companions, which gained the approval of the non-Shi'ah, as a result of which they venerate all the companions, close their eyes on the acts of some of them, which contradict the purpose and spirit of Islam.

1- Hayat al-Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (s), 2:18.

THE SHI'ITE VIEW CONCERNING THE COMPANIONS

The Shi'ah are unanimously agreed on venerating the companions and admitting their excellence because they have stood the test in supporting the religion.This is supported by the following:

Supplication of Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a)

One of the supplications of Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a.) in which he prayed for the Prophet's (s) companions is this: 'O God! And [have mercy] on the companions of Muhammad (s) especially those who made good their companionship and stood the test; those who supported, sheltered and received him kindly; those who promptly responded to his call when the Prophet (s) brought the proof of his message to their attention; those who left behind their spouses and children to help make his word supreme; those who fought their fathers and sons to help consolidate his mission and sided with him; those whose bosoms were full of love for him, expecting an unfailing reward; those who were forsaken by their tribes because they grasped his handhold, and [the influence of] all bonds of kinship relations became nullified when they reposed under the shade of his kinsmen. O God do not delay [the reward] of what they left behind for Your sake, and be pleased with them, and because they were, along with Your Apostle (s), Your callers who invite people to You. Show Your mercy to them (i.e. reward them) for their migration from their clans' habitations of comfort for a life of difficulty."

Imam Zayn al-Abidin's prayer for the companions and his pleading for God's mercy for them does not include the hypocrites and those who entertained doubts with regard to their religion; those who conspired against the Apostle of God (s) by night and by day. His prayer was for the God-fearing and the pious who restrain themselves in matters of religion, people like the distinguished companion Ammar bin Yasir,

who revolted against injustice and oppression, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari and righteous people like them.

Sayyid Ali Khan's View

With regard to the companions, Sayyid Ali Khan holds a very rational view. He says: 'Our view is that with regard to the question of probity the companions were similar to others; probity and personal integrity is only a necessary consequent of companionship to the Prophet (s). It does not earn one salvation from hellfire and the wrath of God the Omnipotent, unless one has true faith and a sincere heart. Therefore, whoever we know to have had upright conduct and faith, acted on the Prophet's (s) command concerning his household, and died in that condition, people like Salman al-Farisi, Abu Dharr and Ammar, we associate ourselves with them and seek nearness to God by loving them. And whoever we know to have reneged on his faith and declared hostility against the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) we consider them enemies and repudiate them for God's sake. About those whose condition is unknown we say nothing'.[1]

This is a very sound position because to love the eminent companions is to love God and seek proximity to Him and to hate the deviated and hypocrites is to detest falsehood and draw near to God Who has enjoined hostility to falsehood and evil.

Sayyid Sharaf al-Din's View

Sayyid Sharaf al-Din (may God illuminate his tomb) has said: 'Whoever grasps our opinion concerning the companions will know that it is the moderate view because we do not take an extreme view like the Extremists (*al-Ghulat*) who consider them all as unbelievers, nor are we negligent like the non-Shi'ah who consider all of them as having been trustworthy. The Kahiliyah sect and other extremists like them have taken all the companions to be apostates. On the other hand, the Sunnis consider each and every Muslim who has heard the Prophet (s) or seen him to be upright and a man of probity, for which they invoke the hadith: '[Venerate] every one among them, completely and entirely.'

1- Al-Darjat al-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat al-Shi'ah p. 11.

But in our view, companionship per se, although of great merit, does not alone confer infallibility; therefore, the companions, like any other people consist of upright men who were the eminent and learned among them; the unjust, including the criminal hypocrites; and those whose condition is unclear. We depend on their men of integrity and associate ourselves with them in this and the next worlds.

As for those who committed injustice against the testamentary legatee and brother of the Prophet (s), and other criminals such as the son of Hind, the son of al-Nabighah, the son of al-Zarqa' the son of Uqbah and the son of Artat there is no compliment for them and no consequence. As for those about whose condition nothing is known, we say nothing till their case becomes clear.

'This is our view regarding the hadith narrators among the companions, and it is the view which is propounded by the Book and the Sunnah, as treated in detail in the works on principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*). However, the non-Shi'ah went out of their way in venerating all the people they called companions leaving aside all moderation. Thus, they accepted as authorities both the good among them and the bad; they blindly follow any Muslim who had seen or heard from the Prophet (s) and severely criticize whoever opposes this extremism. They rebuke us harshly when we reject the narrations of many companions either because we consider them lacking in probity or because their character was unknown, although we only do this in compliance with our obligation under the divine law which stipulates that religious truths should be verified, and the sound Prophetic traditions identified.

They distrust and lay accusations against us out of ignorance. Should they act more rationally and apply intellectual principles they will see how the idea that all the companions were men of probity cannot hold water. Had they reflected on the Glorious Qur'an, they would have found it replete in the verses of the two chapters 'The Repentance' and 'The Confederates', which suffice to illustrate our point.'[1]

Imam Sharaf al-Din's position is the epitome of reason and proof. The Shi'ah do not regard the companions from a sentimental point of view; rather they conform to scientific methodology and the principles of

1- Al Muraja'at.

divine law. The Shi'ah revere all those companions who contributed in consolidating Islam, withstood all the grave incidents that visited the Muslim community, and faced great tribulations. On the other hand, they assign no importance to those people whose religious behaviour was questionable, and were hostile to God and His Apostle (s) and deviated from Islam; people like Marwan bin al-Hakam and his father al-Walid bin Uqbah who God called a sinner, Dhu al-Thadyah and Tha'labah bin Hatib.[1]

The View of a Zaydi scholar

Perhaps the most eloquent presentation written on this matter in terms of originality, depth and employing strong arguments from the Book and the Sunnah, is the response of one Zaydi scholar to Hasan al-Basri's view. The outstanding scholar has treated the topic from all angles in the light of the Book and the Sunnah, and refuted Hasan al-Basri, who stopped short of censuring the people who provoked the battles of the Camel and Siffin.

It is better to mention what Hasan al-Basri said first before we bring the refutation.

Hasan al-Basri's View

Hasan al-Basri said: When the battles of the Camel and Siffin were mentioned to me I said: 'That was blood from which God has purified our swords so we should not soil our tongues by [speaking about] it. Those were circumstances hidden from us and its reports are so remote from the real events, therefore, it is unbecoming of us to discuss them. If anyone among those people was wrong it would have been incumbent upon us to preserve our loyalty to the Prophet (s) with respect to them. It is only honourable to preserve our loyalty to the Prophet (s) with respect to A'ishah, his spouse, or al-Zubayr the son of his aunt or Talhah whom he shielded with his hand.

Why do we have to curse or denounce anyone Muslim at all? Is there any reward for cursing and repudiating? On the Day of Resurrection God, the Exalted will not question the *mukallaf* (i.e. a person under obligation to observe religious law) and say 'Why did you not curse?'

1- Hayat al-Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (s), 2:116-117.

but He will ask him 'Why did you curse?' Should a man live all his life without cursing the Devil, he would not have disobeyed God or sinned by that. If one is to replace the cursing with praying for God's forgiveness it would have been better for him.

In addition, how is it permissible for the common people to indulge in matters pertaining to leading personalities? Those people were the princes and leaders of this community and our position today is, by far, inferior to theirs, so how does it become us to cast aspersions on them? Is it not loathsome for the subjects to talk about the details of matters pertaining to the king's and his affairs with his children, cousins, wives and concubines? The Apostle of God (s) was Mu'awiya's brother-in-law (Mu'awiya's sister Umm Habibah was his wife) so civility demands that the honour of Umm Habibah who was a mother of the believers, should be preserved with respect to her brother. How could it be permitted to curse someone between whom and the Apostle of God (s) affection has been established? Did not all the exegetes say that the Qur'anic verse:

﴿عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَوَدَّةً﴾

"It may be that God will bring about affection between you and those with whom you are at enmity."[1]

Has been revealed concerning Abu Sufyan? And this denotes Abu Sufyan's marrying his daughter to the Apostle of God (s)…We should assume that all what the Shi'ah relate about their differences and disputes was not the case; that they were like siblings, no one ever harboured ill-feeling towards one another, and no dispute ever occurred between them.

The Response of the Zaydi Scholar

Let us listen attentively to this decisive response:

"Had God, the Exalted not made it a duty to be hostile to His enemies and to be loyal to His friends, making it a binding obligation on the Muslims, which is also supported by the intellect and explained in the

1- *Surah al-Mumtahinah, 60:7.*

narrations; we would not have been hostile to anyone nor denounced anyone on account of religion.

﴿لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ﴾

God the Glorious says: *"You will not find a people believing in God and the Last Day endearing those who oppose God and His Apostle even though they were their own parent, children, brothers or kinsfolk."*[1]

﴿وَلَوْ كَانُوا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالنَّبِيِّ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مَا اتَّخَذُوهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَلَكِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ﴾

"Had they believed in God and the Prophet and what has been sent down to him, they would not have taken them for allies."[2]

﴿لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾

"Do not befriend a people on whom God is wrathful."[3]

In addition, there is a consensus (*ijma'*) among the Muslims that God, the Exalted has made it obligatory on them to be hostile to His enemies and loyal to His friends, and that to hate or love for God's sake is obligatory.

Otherwise, it would have been an inconvenience for us to maintain hostility towards those people. Had we believed that excusing ourselves by simply saying: 'O God we did not witness their affair, and there is no meaning in indulging into issues unknown to us,' was acceptable to God we would have been loyal to them based on that pretext. However, we fear that the Glorious God might reply to us by saying: Their affairs may be hidden from your eyes but certainly not from your hearts and ears; sound narrations to that effect have reached you, based on the like of which you considered it imperative to believe in the Prophet (s), and be loyal to those who believed in him and denounce those who disobeyed and disbelieved him. You have been

1- *Surah al-Mujadalah, 58:22.*
2- *Surah al-Ma'idah: 81.*
3- *Surah al-Mumtahinah, 60:13.*

commanded to ponder on the Qur'an and what the Apostle (s) had brought, so, why did you not take heed, lest you be among the people who will say in the hereafter:

﴿رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءَنَا ﴾

"O Lord! We obeyed our leaders and elders."[1]

As for the issue of cursing, God has indeed enjoined it [in certain conditions]. Consider the saying of God the Exalted:

﴿أُولَئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ﴾

"Those shall be cursed by God and cursed by the cursers."[2]

The indirect discourse (*ikbar*) in this verse (i.e. that the curser also curses them) denotes the imperative case here [as though God had said let the cursers curse them], similar to His saying:

﴿وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ ﴾

"Divorced women shall wait by themselves for three periods of purity [after menses]."[3]

[Where the imperative case is intended, i.e., divorced women should wait.] God the Exalted has also cursed the usurpers in His word:

﴿لُعِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَى لِسَانِ دَاوُودَ﴾

"The faithless among the Children of Israel were cursed on the tongue of David."[4]

1- *Surah al-Ahzab, 33:67.*
2- *Surah al-Baqarah, 2:159.*
3- *Surah al-Baqarah, 2:228.*
4- *Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:78.*

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا﴾

"Indeed those who torment God and His Apostle are cursed by God in the world and the hereafter and He has prepared a humiliating punishment for them."[1]

﴿مَلْعُونِينَ أَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوا أُخِذُوا وَقُتِّلُوا تَقْتِيلًا﴾

"Accursed, they will be seized wherever they are confronted and slain violently."[2]

﴿وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ﴾

"And indeed My curse will be on you till the Day of Retribution."[3]

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَنَ الْكَافِرِينَ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيرًا﴾

"Indeed God has cursed the faithless and prepared for them a blaze."[4]

As for their assertions: 'What reward is there for cursing?' 'God the Exalted will not ask His servants why they did not curse but, perhaps, why they did', 'that it would have been better if one would say: may God forgive so-and-so instead of: may God curse so-and-so' and that 'should one spend all his life without cursing Satan he would not be blamed.' All these come from the ignoramuses, who do not know what they are saying. Cursing is a pious deed that invites heavenly reward if done in the right way, which is to curse a person who deserves it, for God's sake and not out of bigotry and selfish desires. In the divine law there is cursing in the case of disowning a child, as the Qur'an says that in the fifth testimony the man should say: "that God's curse shall be upon him if he were lying." Had God not wanted His servants to mention this word [i.e. curse] He would not have let it appear in His law, nor would He repeat it several times in His glorious book."

This scholar adds:

1- *Surah al-Ahzab, 33:57.*
2- *Surah al-Ahzab, 33:61.*
3- *Surah Sad, 38:78.*
4- *Surah al-Ahzab, 33:64.*

'Many companions have cursed Uthman who was their caliph. A'ishah used to say: 'Kill Na'thal, for he has reneged…, may God curse Na'thal.[1]

Abdullah bin Mas'ud has also cursed Uthman. Mu'awiya cursed Ali bin Abi Talib and his two sons Hasan and Husayn (‘a) while they were alive and living in Iraq, he used to curse them in Sham during his sermons and in his prayers. Abu Bakr and Umar have cursed Sa'ad bin Ubadah while he was alive; they also denounced him and sent him out of Medina to Sham. Umar has cursed Khalid bin al-Walid when he killed Malik bin Nuwayrah. Cursing is still a widespread practice among Muslims whenever they find a person committing a sin that deserves cursing and repudiation.

If it was an acceptable custom to preserve someone's honour for the sake of his father, it would have been incumbent to preserve the companions' honour by not cursing their children, in which case it would have been necessary to refrain from cursing Umar bin Sa'ad, Husayn's killer, in reverence for his father; or Yazid, for the sake of his father Mu'awiya, although he was the one responsible for the incident of al-Harrah and the killing of al-Husayn (‘a); or Ubaydullah bin Umar for his father Umar bin al-Khattab's sake, although he killed al-Hurmuzan and fought Ali (‘a) in the battle of Siffin.

If refraining from harbouring hostility against these companions of Muhammad the Apostle of God (s) meant preserving his honour with respect to his companions and respecting his covenants, we would have had no enmity against them even if our necks were to be struck with swords. However, the Apostle of God's (s) love for his companions was not like the love of the ignorant who support his friend even in sin; the Apostle of God (s) enjoined the love of his companions on account of their obedience to God. If they disobeyed Him and forsook what necessitated love for them, he would have had a different stand, for certainly the Apostle (s) had no blind love for anyone.

Indeed, the Apostle of God (s) wanted that God's enemies should be treated as such even if they were his kinsmen, just as he wanted that Godly people should be treated as friends even if they were the

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1- Tarikh Tabari 4:459; al-Kamil 3:206; bin al-Athir's al-Nihayah 5:80; Tadhkirat al-Khawas p.64-66; al-Futuh 2:249-255.

remotest people from him in terms of family relationship. What proves this is the Muslim consensus (*ijma'*) that God the Exalted has commanded Muslims to be hostile to he who apostatizes after having accepted Islam or turns a hypocrite, even if they were among the Prophet's (s) companions. He commanded that the hand of the thief should be severed, and the slanderer and fornicator flogged even if they were among the Muhajirin and the Ansar. Do you not consider his saying: 'If Fatima daughter of Muhammad were to steal, I would have had her hand cut off.' Although she was his daughter who was just like himself, he was not ready to allow his love for her to be at the expense of God's religion. He had 'the people of calumny' flogged and among them was Sath bin Uthathah who fought at Badr.

If the companions' position was such that they could not be assailed even if they disobeyed God, simply because they answered to the epithet *sahabah* (i.e. companion of the Prophet (s)), then the companions of Moses (‘a.), about whom the *holy Qur'an says:*

﴿وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَأَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ﴾

"Relate to them [O Muhammad] an account of him to whom We gave Our signs, but he became one of the perverse".[1]

Should have been revered like the companions of Muhammad (s). *Moses' companions who worshipped the calf should also have enjoyed the same position because they were all companions to Moses (‘a),* a great one among the apostles of God, the Exalted.

Had the companions recognized this position for themselves they would have respected it, but they did not. Here are some instances which show that the companions of the Prophet (s) believed the contrary.

Ali, Ammar, Abu al-Haytham bin al-Tayhan, Khuzaymah bin Thabit and all the Muhajirin and the Ansar who sided with Ali did not hold that view, for they did not close their eyes on the actions of Talhah and Zubayr. Instead, they dealt with them and their followers the way the vicious are dealt with in our day. On the other hand, Talhah, Zubayr,

1- *Surah al-A’raf, 7:175.*

A'ishah and their followers did not desist from opposing Ali (‘a); they took him on and fought him.

Mu'awiya and Ammar had little affection for Ali (‘a); they even attacked him directly and cursed him, his children, and all the living members of his family. His companions were also killed. Likewise, Ali (‘a) cursed these men, Abu al-A'war al-Sulaymi and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari in his daily prayers, although they were all companions of the Prophet.

Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas, Muhammad bin Salamah, Usamah bin Zayd, Sa'ad bin Amar bin Nufayl, Abdullah bin Umar, Hassan bin Thabit and Anas bin Malik decided neither to support Ali (‘a) nor Talhah and Zubayr even though they were superior to them according to Muslim consensus. These people claimed to have feared that Ali (‘a) could have been mistaken to fight Talhah and Zubayr as the two might have been wrong to fight Ali (‘a).

Uthman [ibn Affan] exiled Abu Dhar to al-Rabadhah, similar to the way people accused of gross indecency and treason are outlawed. Uthman also tormented Ammar and bin Mas'ud because they admonished him for the wrongs they claimed he had committed. Then Uthman perpetrated the atrocities you have heard about and the people subjected him to what you and all the people know.

When Zubayr bin al-Awwam sought the permission of Umar [ibn al-Khattab when he was caliph] to participate in the wars he answered him: 'I will close this valley in the face of the companions of Muhammad (s) to prevent them from spreading among the people and leading them astray.' The people did not criticize Umar because of what he said, or Uthman for stamping on Ammar's stomach and breaking bin Mas'ud's rib, or Ammar and bin Mas'ud for their condemnation of Uthman, the way the non-Shi'ah disapprove of discussing about the companions of the Prophet (s). Nor did the companions believed to have that position which the non-Shi'ah believe they have, unless they claim to know the companions' rights better than they themselves did.

Ali and al-Abbas maintain their view of rejecting the narration ascribed to the Prophet (s) which says: "We the prophets are not to be inherited", considering it a forged one. They insisted that the Prophet (s) could not

have informed others of this injunction, and concealed it from them while they deserved to know it more than others.

Umar bin al-Khattab acknowledges that the members of the consultative council[which he appointed to deliberate on who should be caliph after him] enjoyed the pleasure of the Apostle of God (s) at his death, but then gives orders that, should they delay in reaching a decision on the question of leadership their necks should be struck off. He gave this order after criticizing them in such bitter words that, should the non-Shi'ah hear them today, they would have dragged him to court by his collar, testified to his being guilty of *rafd* [i.e. 'rejection'] and condemned him to death. If defaming some companions constituted *rafd* then Umar bin al-Khattab was the person guiltiest of *rafd* and the leader of all 'rejectors'. Consider his famous saying: 'The oath of fealty to Abu Bakr was a hasty affair from whose evil God has saved the Muslims, so whoever repeats such a thing should be killed.' This is more of a criticism of the first oath of allegiance.

It has been reported that in private Umar used to disparage Abu Bakr; he called his son Abdurrahman 'a despicable creature who is, however, better than his father [Abu Bakr]'. Concerning the chief of the Ansar Sa'ad bin Ubadah, Umar said: 'Kill Sa'ad, may God kill him! Kill him for he is a hypocrite!' He also abused Abu Hurayrah and questioned the veracity of his narrations. Similarly, Umar reviled Khalid bin al-Walid, questioned the soundness of his religion and ruled that he was a sinner who should be condemned to death. Umar charged Amr bin al-As and Mu'awiya bin Abi Sufyan with treason and accused them of misappropriating public funds. Umar was quick at hurting others, and he confronted and reviled people very often. Hardly was any companion free from the evil of his tongue or hands. Because of this, they hated him and grew impatient of his rule despite the numerous conquests the Muslim nation achieved during his rule. Now, why did Umar not respect the companions the way the non-Shi'ah do? Either he or they must be wrong.

The purpose of all this talk is to clarify the fact that the companions were similar to the rest of the people; they enjoyed the same rights and were charged with the same responsibilities as others, and we can blame him who did wrong and praise him who did well. They had no merit over other Muslims, except, of course their having seen and lived

with the Apostle of God (s), a fact which could even have made their sinning more heinous. By witnessing his miracles, religious doctrines became self-evident truths to them, while we, who have not seen them, gain our faith in Islamic doctrines only through reasoning and speculation. As such, we are more prone to doubts and mistakes, and therefore, our sins are lighter and more excusable.

To continue our citations, A'isha mother of the faithful, brought out the shirt of God's Apostle (s) saying; This is the shirt of God's Apostle, it is not yet worn out but Uthman has already rendered his Sunnah obsolete….Kill Na'thal, may God kill Na'thal.' As if not satisfied with all this, she added: 'I bear witness that in the hereafter Uthman will be [no better than] than a carcass [thrown] on the road.' Some people say that she related this as a narration from the Prophet (s) while others consider her its source. Should anybody dare mention these words today, without ascribing them to their source, some non-Shi'ah will consider him an atheist!

In addition, notable men among the companions besieged Uthman and no one opposed that move, considered it a grievous action, and tried to lift it, except one man. As you all know, this man was among the outstanding and noble companions of the Apostle of God (s), closer to him than Abu Bakr and Umar, and chosen as the caliph, i.e. Imam Ali (‘a.). Now if the companions were right in besieging Uthman then they did not have that lofty position where the non-Shi'ah have placed them. If, on the contrary, they were wrong then our view has been proven. This means that it is possible for individual companions to be off track just like us. Here we are not belittling the consensus (although there is no real consensus on killing Uthman). What we are saying is that many Muslims had agreed on that, and our opponent will agree with us that the action was wrong and sinful, thereby accepting that it is possible for a companion to be wrong and to commit sin.

Mughirah bin Shu'bah, a companion was accused of adultery and some people testified before Umar bin al-Khattab to that effect but he did not dismiss the case and say that this was impossible and false, because this man was a companion of the Apostle of God (s). Nor did Umar reprimand the witnesses and say to them: 'Woe on to you! Why did you not ignore him since God has commanded you to disregard the faults of the Apostle's companion? Why did you not leave him to the

Apostle (s) who has said 'Leave my companions to me"? Instead, Umar promptly listened to the allegation, called in the witnesses, and after the first testimony he said to Mughirah 'a quarter of you has gone', after the second testimony he said 'half of you has gone', after the third testimony he said 'three quarters of you have gone' when the fourth witness faltered he had the three flogged [for calumny]. Why did Mughirah not say to Umar: how can you listen to these people who are not companions while I am one, and the Apostle (s) has said 'My companions are like stars; whomever you follow, you will be guided.'? Mughirah never said this, rather he submitted to God's law.

There was a companion of the Prophet who was superior to Mughirah, Qudamah bin Maz'un by name, who drank wine during the rule of Umar. Although he was a prominent companion, who participated in the battle of Badr, Umar did not stop the testimonies against him nor did he avert the punishment from him because of Qudamah's services at Badr, nor yet, did he say that the Apostle of God (s) had forbidden the mention of the companions' faults.

Umar also carried out the prescribed punishment (*al-hadd*) of flogging on his son who died as a result. His son had lived during the time of God's Apostle (s) but this did not hinder his father from punishing him.

Ali (‘a) has said: 'Whoever relates to me a narration from the Apostle of God, I will make him swear an oath for that.' Is this not like accusing them of dishonesty? He did not leave out anybody among the Muslims except Abu Bakr, as the report says. Ali (‘a.) had on more than one occasion clearly called Abu Hurayrah a liar, and he also said that no one fabricates lies against the Apostle of God (s) more than this man from Dus (i.e. Abu Hurayrah).

During the illness in which Abu Bakr died, he said: 'I wish I had not uncovered Fatima's house even if it was closed in preparation for war ' and regretted that action.

A reasonable person should ponder on why Ali (‘a.) delayed giving the oath of fealty to Abu Bakr for six months, till the time Fatima (‘a.) died. If he was right in doing so, Abu Bakr must have been wrong in usurping the caliphate from him, and if Abu Bakr was right, then it was wrong for Ali (‘a.) to have delayed taking the oath of fealty.

During the illness in which he died, Abu Bakr said to the companions: 'When I appointed the person I considered the best among you (i.e. Umar) as your leader you all became envious, each one of you wanting the leadership for himself, because you have seen the world approaching. I swear by God that you will surely use curtains of brocade and cushions of silk.' Is this not a reproach of the companions and a clear charge of envying Umar because he had appointed him caliph? When Abu Bakr named Umar for that position Talhah said to him, 'What will you say to your Lord when He asks you why you appointed a harsh, uncouth man to lead His servants?' Abu Bakr said to those present, 'Help me sit up,' and then answered Talhah: 'Do you want to scare me [by mentioning the name of God]? When He asks me, I will say that I appointed the best man among my people as their leader.' Then Abu Bakr reviled Talhah and laid many accusations against him. Talha's words were meant to discredit Umar; likewise, all Abu Bakr said was a defamation of Talhah.'

Thus, this Zaydi scholar supports his opinion by citing numerous historical incidents where the companions discredited one another, which clearly shows that the Prophet's (s) companions were men of probity.

Then he adds: How could the Apostle of God (s) have said: 'My companions are like stars, whoever you follow among them you are guided?' Undoubtedly, this would have meant that both the people of Sham and Siffin [who fought Ali (‘a.)] and the Iraqis [who supported Ali (‘a.)] were rightly guided; that the killer of Ammar bin Yasir was guided, while in a sound hadith the Prophet (s) says to Ammar: *'the unjust group will kill you',* and the Qur'an says:

"Fight the one which aggresses until it returns to God's ordinance."[1]

He who disobeys God's command could not be counted as guided.

Had this hadith been sound Busr bin Arta'ah who killed two young sons of Ubaydullah bin Abbas would necessarily have been rightly guided since he was a companion. Similarly, Amr bin al-As and Mu'awiya who used to curse Ali and his two sons (‘a) after the daily prayers would have been rightly guided. There were abnormal characters

1 -*Surat al-Hujarat, 49:9.*

among the companions who drank wine and committed adultery, bin Mahjan al-Thaqafi being one of them. Now, can anyone who follows him be considered rightly guided? No doubt, this hadith is among the forgeries concocted by those who supported the Umayyad cause through forging hadiths in their favour.'

After mentioning a number of fake hadiths this scholar continues: The sayings of the Qur'an: *"God was certainly pleased with the faithful'* and *'Muhammad, apostle of God, and those who are with him…"* and the Prophet's saying *'God has gazed at the people of Badr,'* are all subject to one condition: continuing on the right path to the end of their lives. It is not possible that the Wise God will tell His fallible servant to do whatever he likes and that he will not face punishment.

'If one ponders on the conditions of the companions he will find that they were just like us, whatever is possible concerning us was also possible with regard to them. The only difference between us and them is their stay with the Prophet (s), and, although it was a noble thing, it did not confer infallibility on whoever saw the Apostle of God (s) and stayed with him for a day, a month or more.

'Who can dare say that it is not permissible to denounce anyone among the companions of Muhammad (s) even if they misbehaved or disobeyed God, while He has addressed His Prophet (s) in these words "If you ascribe a partner to God your work shall fail".

Thus, this Zaydi scholar mentions a lot of arguments to prove that the companions were just like other Muslims; they could be right and they could be wrong, some were men of integrity while others were not. He has discussed this topic objectively and meticulously and shown that intellectual arguments and historical documents do not support the idea that all the companions were men of probity.

In any case, the Shi'ah view on the issue of the companions is realistic and it has nothing to do with sectarianism, and our discussion of this topic is not meant to stir sectarian feelings. Nothing is intended with this intellectual discussion except enlightenment and to demonstrate the originality of the Shi'ah's view on this question.

DREADFUL PERIODS

The Shi'ah have gone through harsh and dreadful periods in which they faced severe tribulations. Umayyad and Abbasid rulers subjected them to all sorts of torture, and during the rule of Mu'awiya they were tyrannized as a matter of policy. Imam Abu Jafar [al-Baqir] (‘a.) has related a gruesome picture of what had befallen their Shi'ah during the days of Mu'awiya, saying: 'Our Shi'ah have been murdered in every town and [their] hands and feet have been severed on mere suspicion. Whoever was known for his love and devotion to us was either imprisoned, plundered, or his house was demolished.'[1]

The renown poet Abdullah bin Amir who was known as al-Ibli portrays to what extent he was tyrranised because of his love for the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a.). He says:

'They chased me away when I praised Ali; considering it a disease in me.
By my Lord I lost no time before my heart is filled with the love of Ali.
And his children; I love them out of my love for Ahmad,the Prophet.
Love for religion's sake, rather than the world; the worst kind of love is that which is worldly.
God has molded me in a lock of their hair; my love is not that of a strange impostor.'

This depicts the oppression and banishment al-Ibli has suffered because of his love for the master of the God-fearing, the Commander of the Faithful Ali (‘a.), but in spite of it he was not distracted. He was devoted to the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a.) and was most sincere to them, not out of were desire or sentiment but for the sake of the religion which has enjoined loyalty to the pure progeny on all Muslims.

1- Bin Abi al-Hadid's Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, 3:15.

In some of his poems, al-Numayri alludes to the oppression the Shi'ah endured as a result of their devotion to the Prophet's (s) progeny, saying,

'The Prophet's (s) progeny and their devotees resort to appeasement for fear of being killed.

Christians and Jews are safe while they are ostracized by the nation of monotheism.'

The followers of all religions and Islamic sects lived in peace and tranquility in the Islamic polity but, for the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a.), life was dreadful because the ruling authorities subjected them to all sorts of persecution. When Imam Abu Jafar al-Baqir (‘a.) was asked, 'How are you?' he answered with pain, 'I am apprehensive by virtue of [my relationship with] the Apostle of God (s) while all others are safe thanks to him.'[1]

The following poetical verses portraying the difficulties and tribulations that the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a.) have faced have been ascribed to one of their Imams:

'We are the children of Mustafa [i.e.the Prophet (s)]

victims of tribulations;

our Kazim (‘a), of all people, suffers it.

Our tragedy is the worst;

our first has endured it,

as well as our last.

The people revel in their festivals

while our festivals are [mired by] our obsequies.'

The Islamic festivals such as the Lesser and Greater Bairam that Muslims observe have turned into commemorations of grief because of the severe oppression, imprisonment and killing the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a.) suffered at the hands of the rulers of their times.

1- Mizan al-I'tidal, 4:160.

Al-Tughra'i depicts the ordeals of the Shi'ah in heart-rending verses, saying,

'The Jews' love for Moses is apparent and their loyalty to his brother's children is evident.

As well as their Imam from among the offspring of Aaron by whom they were guided, and for every people there is a guide.

Likewise the Christians revere wood shavings and sticks out of their love for their Prophet.

But whenever a Muslim is loyal to the Household of Ahmad (s) they either killed him or stigmatized him as unbeliever.

Indeed, this is the incurable disease that led sedentary and rural minds astray.

They did not respect the right of the Prophet Muhammad (s) with regard to his Household (‘a), and God is in ambush.'

Al-Tughra'i alludes to the Jews' ardent love for the offspring of Moses their Prophet and his brother Aaron (‘a), as well as the Christians' veneration and loyalty for whoever is in any way related to their Prophet Jesus Christ (‘a.), to the extent of venerating the board he sat on. The Muslims did the opposite; they hounded, persecuted and killed their Prophet's progeny (‘a) and those who loved them.

Concerning the tragedies of the Shi'ah, another poet says:

'Due to their love for their Prophet, the Jews are immune to the disgrace engendered by treacherous times. The people of the cross strut in the villages of Najran because of their devotion to Jesus (‘a) but the believers are being shot with fire in remote regions, because of their love for the Household of Muhammad (‘a).'

Historians relate that one day the daughter of al-Fadl bin Dakin who was Shi'ah came home crying. When he asked why she was crying she answered: 'Father the people say that you are a Shi'ah!' al-Fadl said in verse:

'I concealed the matter from you so much till I seemed to be dumb and unable to reply to my questioner.

That you and I may be safe from the slander of traitors; may you be free if a living person can be safe from the people!'[1]

To be accused of Shi'ism during the Umayyad era was enough to invite wrath and punishment from the ruling authorities. Muslim historians report that it was lighter for one to be accused of infidelity, hersay or apostasy than to be accused of Shi'ism.The matter reached a situation whereby for the Alids to greet one was enough to expose him to the risk of castigation. It is narrated that Ibrahim bin Hurthumah entered Medina and someone among the Alids call on him. Ibrahim said to the man: "Go away from me and do not spill my blood.'[2]

Umayyad and Abbasid hostilities against the Shi'ah had reached a point where they ordered their governors and officials to kill every new born child who was named Ali. It is rather queer that when once Ali bin Rabah learnt of this edict he became so apprehensive of death that he declared: I will never forgive whoever calls me Ali, for my name is Uli![3]

Another dreadful situation the Shi'ah faced during those eras was the brandishing of the charge of Shi'ism. When a person wanted to conspire against someone else he would simply set him up and accuse him of Shi'ism, and consequently his possessions would be confiscated and he would be subjected to all sorts of punishment till he renounced Shi'ism publicly.[4]

In any case, the rulers of the Umayyad and Abbasid periods went to extremes in maltreating and killing the Ahl al-Bayt's (‘a) followers. Ziyad bin Abih hounded and killed the pious men among the Shi'ahs wherever they were found; he subjected them to such agonies as cutting their hands and feet, plucking out their eyes and crucifying them on the trunks of death palms. The bloodthirsty terrorist Hajjaj bin Yusuf put to the sword 120,000 Shi'ah during his rule, 50,000 men, and 30,000 women (16,000 of them naked) died in his prisons. Concerning him, Umar bin Abdulaziz said: 'Should all nations present their vicious men and we present Hajjaj we would have beaten them.'

1- Tarikh Baghdad, 12: 35.
2- Tarikh Baghdad, 6:127.
3- Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, 7:319.
4- Sati' al-Bilad al-Arabiyyat wa al-Dawlat al-Uthmaniyyah, p.40.

In later times also the Shi'ah have faced the worst atrocities; the criminal [Ottoman], Sultan Salim unleashed a wave of killing on the *Ahl al-Bayt ('a)* partisans, backed by the fatwa of some corrupt and deviate court jurist.[1] Imam Sharaf al-din says that Shaykh Nuh of the Hanafi School of Islamic jurisprudence issued a fatwa to the effect that the Shi'ah were unbelievers and it was a duty to kill them. In consequence, tens of thousands of the Shi'ah of Aleppo and other cities were killed, and the survivors left Aleppo and not one Shi'ite remained there, although Shi'ism was widespread and firmly established there.[2]

Earlier on, *Sultan Bibaris* issued a decree in 665 A.H. that only the four [Sunni] schools of jurisprudence should be followed, banning all others. He also decreed that no one would be appointed a judge, or have his witness accepted or appointed a speaker or prayer leader unless he followed one of those four schools.[3]

Any how, unjust rulers have tyrannized the Shi'ah because they were at the forefront of opposition to their policies which did not carry the slightest semblance of justice and truth.

Al-Khawarazmi's Letter to the People of Nishabur

It is pertinent here to mention al-Khawarazmi's letter which he sent to the Shi'ah of Nishabur commiserating with on the persecution that befell them. This epistle faithfully portrays the gross injustices the Shi'ah suffered since the earliest periods.

It reads:

'You have heard, may God guide you and your affairs on the way of piety, what that sultan has said, who is prejudiced against justice and averse to excellence, who does not hesitate to destroy his religion when the world is pleasant towards him, who does not think of giving priority to God's pleasure over his own.'

'You and me, may God set us aright, are a group of people for whom God did not deem the world appropriate; rather, our reward has been stored away for us in the next world. He has required us to disregard

1- Al-Durar al-Kaminah, 2:43.
2- Al-Shi'atu wa al-Hakimun, p.187.
3- Khutat al-Maqrizi, 4:344.

temporal gains and promised us the deferred rewards. He has grouped us into two: some have died martyrs and some live as fugitives. The living envy the dead their condition, and harbour no distaste for the death which befell them. The Commander of the Faithful and pillar of religion [Imam Ali (‘a)] says: 'Tribulations befall our partisans (*shi'ah*) faster than the way water runs down [a declivity].'

'This is a saying that arises from affliction, the sufferers of which are born in the midst of turmoil and trials. Thus, their lives are devoid of pleasure, their hearts filled with agony, their days are prejudiced against them and the world turns its back on them. Therefore, if we are true followers of our Imams with regard to obligatory and supererogatory aspects of divine law, and follow their footsteps on how we approach every issue, good or bad, then we should also follow their footsteps and endure tribulations as well.'

This section of al-Khawarazmi's letter reflects what the partisans of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a.) suffered at the hands of tyrants and the lofty stations God the Exalted has prepared for them in the hereafter.

Al-Khawarazmi continues:

'Our mistress Fatima (‘a.) was dispossessed, on the day of Saqifah, of what she inherited from her father.The Commander of the Faithful was displaced from the position of successor to the Prophet (s). Hasan (‘a) was secretly poisoned and his brother [Husayn] (‘a) was openly killed. Zayd bin Ali's body was nailed at the al-Kannasah [quarter of Kufa] after he was beheaded on the battlefield[1] and his two sons Muhammad and Ibrahim were murdered by Isa bin Musa, the Abbasid. Musa bin Ja'far [‘a] was killed in Harun's prison. Ali bin Musa [‘a] was poisoned by Ma'mun, Idris was defeated at Fakh and made to flee to Andalus and Yahya bin Abdullah was killed after he was given strong guarantees of amnesty.'

In this section al-Khawarazmi relates the tragedies that befell the Prophet's Household (‘a.), the most notable of which was what the ruling classes did to the Alids of Kufa. In short, there was no city in the Islamic common wealth but a Talibi (descendant of Abu Talib) was

1- The body of this great martyr was exhumed and nailed after his head was chopped off.

murdered there, and in those killings Umayyads and Abbasids, Adnanis and Qahtanis have had a hand.

'There is none among the living that we know of from among the Yamanis, the Bakrs and the Mudars;

But have collaborated in spilling their blood, as the Isars collaborated against the Jazrs.'

Al-Khawarazmi continues:

'Their (i.e. the Alids') zeal has led them to their death; they abhorred the life of humiliation and, therefore, died an honourable death. They put their trust in everlasting life, so they gave out their lives generously. They drank no cup of death but their partisans also partook of it, and they underwent no difficulties but their supporters and followers underwent the same.'

These statements of al-Khawarazmi depict the Alids' self-esteem and honour; they refused to live in humiliation and revolted against the unjust rulers of their time, and so did their followers.

In Medina Uthman bin Affan stepped on Ammar bin Yasir's stomach, exiled Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, sent out Amir bin Abd al-Qays al-Tamimi and flogged al-Ashtar al-Nakha'i and Adiy bin Hatam al-Ta'i. He also banished Umar bin Zurarah to Sham and Kumayl bin Ziyad to Iraq, rode rough shod over Ubay bin Ka’b, antagonized Muhammad bin Hudhayfah, treated the issue of bin Salim's killing the way you already know and maltreated Ka’b Dhi al-Hatbah.

Here al-Khawarazmi describes how Uthman treated outstanding companions of the Prophet (s) who criticized his policies.

Then the Umayyads followed Uthman's footsteps, killing those who opposed them and betraying those who were in peace with them.They were irreverent to the Muhajirin and disregarded the Ansar. They neither feared God nor were they ashamed before the people. They regarded God's servants and His property as their own possessions. They demolished the Ka’ba, enslaved the Prophet's (s) companions and postponded the prescribed prayers. They strangulated freemen, treated Muslims' womenfolk the same way they treated the women of unbelievers. When an Umayyad turned a sinner, he skipped the prayers on the pretext of fatigue.'

This part relates the deadly crimes the Umayyads perpetrated during their merciless rule over the people.

Al-Khawarazmi's letter continues:

'Mu'awiya killed Hijr bin Adiy al-Kindi, Amr bin al-Hamaq al-Khuza'i, although he promised him safety and amnesty. Ziyad bin Sumayyah killed thousands of Kufan and Basran Shi'ah in cold blood, and imprisoned a large number of them. Eventually, God caused Mu'awiya to die while he was still engrossed in his worst deeds, thus, his life ended in a most inglorious way. Then his son [Yazid] took over from him, killing the sons of the men he had slain. Yazid also murdered Hani bin Urwah al-Muradi, Muhsin bin Aqil al-Hashimi, al-Harith bin Ziyad al-Riyahi, abu Musa Amr bin Qurdah al-Ansari, Habib bin Muzahir al-Asadi, Sa'id bin Abdullah al-Hanafi, Nafi' bin Hilal al-Jumali, Hanzalah bin As'ad al-Shami, 'Abis bin Abi Shabib al-Shakiri, among seventy-odd partisans of al-Husayn (‘a.) on the day of Karbala.

Then Yazid appointed Ubaydullah bin Ziyad a bastard, son of a bastard, to rule over them. He employed all means of killing against them, including hanging their bodies on date palms, till God destroyed him [and he left the world] bearing the heavy weight of crime, because of the blood he spilled and the sanctity of the Shi'ah which he violated.

Thereafter, a group of people, whom God wished to absolve of the responsibility of their omissions and wash them clean of what they had perpetrated, steadfastly confronted that unjust party, and sought to avenge the blood of the martyr, Husayn (‘a), on the bastard, son of the bastard. The paucity of their members, the fact that they had no support and the great members of the Kufans, only increased their audacity for fighting and killing [the enemy], their readiness to lay down their lives and spend their wealth. They stood their ground till Sulayman bin Surad al-Khuza'i, al-Musayyib bin Najib al-Fazari, Ubaydullah bin Wal al-Tamimi and other outstanding believers who were among the elect of the Tabi'un (the generation which followed that of the companions of the Prophet (s)), the torches of guidance and knights of Islam, were killed.'

This section portrays the oppression and murder the tyrant Mu'awiya had poured on the heads of the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*. He had imposed the criminal and terrorist Ziyad bin Abih who hounded them and

committed grave acts of carnage against them. Then Yazid succeeded Mu'awiya and committed such barbaric and heinous crimes that are unheard of in history. This was executed by the illegitimate son [lit. a foundling], bin Marjana who perpetrated all types of sins without the least respect for God's covenants. He killed such outstanding Shi'ah as the pious Maytham al-Tammar and Rashid al-Hujari. When the criminal Yazid died, the best Shi'ah who were known as the *Tawwabun* rebelled against the authorities, to avenge the blood of the beloved grandson of the Prophet (s) and the father of freemen, Imam al-Husayn (‘a.), and the chiefs among them, such as Sulayman bin Surad al-Khuza', died in this way.

Al-Khawarazmi continues: 'Then bin Zubayr dominated Hijaz and Iraq, and killed Mukhtar, who had already taken revenge and vented his anger on the killers of the wronged one [i.e. Imam Husayn (‘a)] and banished those who had betrayed him. Thereafter, they (Ibn Zubayr and his associates) treated the same way, Abu Amr bin Kaysan, Ahmar bin Shumayt, Rafa'at bin Yazid, al-Sa'ib bin Malik and Abdullah bin Kamil, and gathering the remaining Shi'ah [of Kufa] subjected them to mutilation and other outrageous forms of killing. [This continued] until God cleansed the land of Abdullah bin Zubayr and delivered His servants from him and his brother Mus'ab, when Abdulmalik bin Marwan killed both of them. (Qur'an: Anam: 129) This was after Abdullah bin Zubayr had exiled Abdullah bin Abbas and incarcerated Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyyah with the intention of burning him alive.

These words of al-Khawarazmi refer to the revolt which was led by the great leader Mukhtar ibnYusuf al-Thaqafi (may God illuminate his tomb), who cleansed the land of the filth of the treacherous criminals, the killers of the lord of the youth of paradise and father of freemen, Imam Husayn (‘a.). Mukhtar searched them out and executed them. His actions were a great service to the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*. Unfortunately, Abdullah bin Zubayr and his brother Mus'ab marched their forces on Iraq, occupied it and massacred the partisans of the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*, foremost of whom were Mukhtar the governor and his pious group. However, the two brothers could not maintain their sway for long, as Abdulmalik [ibn Marwan] sent his forces into Hijaz and Iraq, and killed Abdullah and Mus'ab, thereby relieving God's servants of their evil.

On what the Shi'ah suffered during the days of the tyrant Abdulmalik, al-Khawarazmi says, "When the field became clear for the family of Marwan, they imposed Hajjaj over the Hijazis and later the Iraqis. This man trifled with the Hashimites, terrorized the Fatimids and massacred the Shi'ah with the aim of wiping out all traces of the Prophetic Household (‘a). Hajjaj was also instrumental in what befell Kumayl bin Ziyad al-Nakha'i.

These tribulations continued uninterrupted throughout Marwanid rule and later Abbasid, because it was God's will that their sins would accumulate to bring their end and their worst crimes would be the culmination of their lives. When He sent forth Zayd bin Ali to save what remained of the neglected religion, the hypocrites of Iraq betrayed him. Then the Syrian parties killed Zayd, Nasr bin Khuzaymah al-Asadi and Mu'awiya bin Ishaq, along with a group of his adherents. Even those who were related with Zayd by marriage and those who simply spoke or walked with him were not spared."

Here al-Khawarazmi points to the heinous crimes of the Marwanids, the most abominable of which was installing as governor, the terrorist Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi who killed the reformers and select of the adherents of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). To save the Muslims, the great martyr Zayd bin Ali proclaimed his revolt, which was in fact one of the glorious upheavals that took place in the Islamic world. However, the Iraqis forsook him as they forsook his grandfather Imam Husayn (‘a.). Thus, Zayd died a chaste man, as he was martyred struggling for the sake of God. After his death the Umayyads hunted down Zayd's followers in order to chastise and annihilate them.

Then Khawarazmi relates part of the travails of the Alids and their partisans, saying, "When they (i.e. the Umayyads) violated the sanctity of those people, thereby committing that grevious sin, God's wrath descended on them and He took away their dominion. He sent forth against them Abu Muslim, or rather, Abu Mujrim [lit. father of the criminal], who, after contemplating the firmness of the Alids and the softness of the Abbasids, cast off all pretensions of piety and indulged in his desires. Exchanging the hereafter for this world, Abu Muslim started by killing Abdullah bin Mu'awiya bin Abdullah bin Ja'far bin Abu Talib. Then he unleashed the dictators of Khorasan, the Kharijites of Sijistan and the Kurds of Isfahan against the Family of Abu

Talib (‘a). He hounded them from every nook and cranny and killed them, until God enabled empowered, against Abu Muslim, the dearest man to him, i.e. Mansur al-Dawaniqi, who killed him the way he had killed others, accusing him of violating the terms on which al-Dawaniqi had received the people's oath of fealty. Abu Muslim's obedience to Mansur al-Dawaniqi, by which he defied God and incurred His wrath, was of no avail to him.

Being a despot, when al-Dawaniqi consolidated his power, he ruled the people with injustice and highhandedness until death overtook him. He left behind his prisons full of the members of the Prophet's Household (‘a) and fountain of purity. He had pursued those who lived in remote provinces and gathered up those who lived near the seat of power; he ordered Umar bin Hisham al-Taghlibi to kill Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Hasani in Sind [in present day Pakistan], so what would you expect of those who lived near him?"

"This was insignificant when compared to the number of people from this Household whom Harun [al-Rashid] had killed and Musa al-Hadi persecuted. You know how al-Hadi treated Husayn bin Ali at al-Fakh, what al-Rashid did to Ali bin al-Aftas al-Husayni, what happened to Ahmad bin Ali al-Zaydi, al-Qasim bin Ali al-Hasani's incarceration and how Ali bin Ghassan bin Hadir al-Khuza'i was earlier arrested. In short, Harun al-Rashid died after he had pulled down the Prophetic tree and uprooted the plant of Imamate. Do you (may God set aright your affairs) have more share in religion than A'mash, whom they (the rulers) reviled, Sharik whom they ostracized, Hisham bin al-Hakam whom they terrorized and Ali bin Yaqtin whom they calumniated?"

This passage relates the tragedies that befell the Alids and their partisans during the times of the Abbasids who had gone to extremes in oppressing and killing them. This section lists the names of the Alid noblemen who were executed by the criminal Abu Muslim al-Khurasani, whom God punished through Mansur al-Dawaniqi to whom he had been most loyal. Later al-Dawaniqi shed much blood in the course of consolidating power for himself and his brother al-Saffah.

'Earlier, Zayd bin Sawhan al-Abdi was killed; Uthman bin Hanif al-Ansari chastised; while Harith bin Qudamah al-Sa'di, Jundub bin Zuhayr al-Azdi, Shurayh bin Hani al-Muradi, Malik bin Ka’b al-Arji, Ma'qal bin Qays al-Riyahi, Harith al-A'war al-Hamdani and Abu al-

Tufayl al-Kinani were forced to go underground. All these people had either been murdered or forced to keep to their houses and live a despicable life; the testamentary legatee (*wasi*) [i.e.Imam Ali (‘a)] would be abused but they dared not respond and they would see his killers and their offspring but could not raise a finger. Moreover, you are not unaware of the distress and helplessness in which people like Rashid al-Hajari and Zurarah bin A'yan and the Shi'ah (may God show them His grace) as a whole generally lived. Their loyalty to God's friends and repudiation of His enemies was their only crime, and what a crime and shortcoming indeed it was!"

Then Khawarazmi relates the tyranny the Shi'ah suffered under Abbasid rule, saying,

"Concerning the Abbasids and their oddities, much can be said. They would give grants to the Daylamites and the Turks, and take them to the North Africans and to the people of Fargahna, while an Imam among the Imams of guidance, and chief of the sons of Mustafa (i.e. the Prophet (s)), would die and no funeral procession would be held for him nor would his grave be built with mortar. Whereas, when a scoundrel or a clown or a wayfarer died his funeral would be attended by men of honour, and judges, leaders and governors would hold obsequies for him in the mosques. He whom they knew to be a freethinker or a sophist was safe, and they never opposed the one who studied philosophical works, but they killed whom they knew to be a Shi'ah, and even spilled the blood of whoever named his son Ali. If no partisan of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) was killed except Mu'alla bin Khunays whom Dawud bin Ali murdered, and no one among them was imprisoned apart from Abu Turab al-Mirwazi, it was enough a great cause for agitation and a wounding of sensibilities that could not be easily atoned for."

"It suffices them [a blemish] that what the Quraysh poets composed during the Age of Ignorance lampooning the Commander of the Faithful (‘a.) and contradicting Muslims' poetry, was duly recorded and related by narrators like al-Waqidi, Wahb bin Munabbih al-Tamimi, al-Kalbi, al-Sharqi bin al-Qutami, al-Haytham bin Adiy and Da'b bin al-Kinani, [whereas the compositions of the Shi'ah were never published]. Some Shi'ah poets who composed verses about the merits of the *wasi* [Imam Ali (‘a)] or even the miracles of the Prophet (s), had their

tongues cut off and their anthologies shredded to pieces. This was what happened to Abdullah bin Ammar al-Barqi and what was intended for Kumayt bin Zayd al-Asadi. Di'bil bin Ali al-Khuza'i was treated in a similar way, while Mansur bin Zubraqan al-Numayri's grave was opened.

The associates of these people also suffered the same fate at the hands of Marwan bin Abi Hafsah al-Yamami and Ali bin Jahb al-Shami, who were steeped in hostility [towards the *Ahl al-Bayt*]. Such was [Abbasid hate of the *Ahl al-Bayt*] that Harun bin al-Khayzaran and Ja'far al-Mutawakkil, [lit. one who puts his trust] in Satan (rather than in the Merciful), would not give out money or gifts except to those who reviled the family of Abu Talib (‘a) and supported the sect of the *nasibi*s (people who were hostile to the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*), people like Abdullah bin Mus'ab al-Zubayri, Wahb bin Wahb al-Bukhtari, Marwan bin Abi Hafsah al-Umawi among the poets, and Abdulmalik bin Qurayb al-Asma'i, among other men of letters. Such people who were honoured during the time of Ja'far [al-Mutawakkil] included Bikr bin Abdullah al-Zubayri, Abu Samt bin Abi al-Jawn al-Umawi and Abu al-Shawarib al-Abshami.'

'[Despite all this] we have held to the 'firmest handle' (i.e. the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*) and preferred religion to the world, so, an increase in the fortunes of some of us will not augment our certainty, nor will a decrease thereof instill the feeling of inferiority in us, for Islam began as a strange thing and it shall become strange again.

"[It is] a word from God and a will from His Apostle (s) which He bequeaths to whomever He wishes of His servants and the outcome will be in favour of the God-fearing. However, the matter does not end here. Ammar bin Yasir (may God have mercy on him) had said on the day of Siffin, 'Should they (the enemy) beat us and make us retreat until we reach Hirj, we will remain certain that we are with the truth and they are on the wrong; God's Apostle (s) had been vanquished before he gained victory and Islam suffered drawbacks before it progressed. '*Alif Lam Mim.* Do the people suppose that they will be let off because they say:

﴿الم ۞ أَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آَمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ﴾

"We have faith' and they will not be tasted?"[1]

"Had it not been for the tribulations and killings that the believers suffer, and the fortunes and numbers of the infidels, hell will not be full and then say:

﴿هَلْ مِنْ مَزِيدٍ﴾

"Is there any more."[2]

God the Exalted would not have said:

﴿وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

"But most of them do not know."[3]

The restless could not be differentiated from the patient, nor the grateful from the ungrateful; and the obedient would not have deserved rewards nor would the sinner have borne the weight of his crimes. If any calamity befalls us, we have already been used to that, should a good turn of fortune be our lot, we have always expected it. Praise be to God we have the means to face every situation; we exercise patience in the face of trial and are grateful in time of ease. The Commander of the Faithful (‘a.) had been reviled from the pulpits for a thousand months, but it has not made us doubt his being the testamentary legatee [of the Prophet]. Muhammad (s) was called a liar for more than ten years but we do not question his prophethood."

These words of Khawarazmi describe the perseverance of the Shi'ah in the face of the severe blows, which the Umayyad and the Abbasid antagonists of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) had inflicted on them. This did not dissuade them from maintaining their loyalty and love for the Prophet's progeny (‘a). In fact, the Shi'ah's firm stand during the rule of the Umayyads and the Abbasids proves that they were the staunchest defenders of Islam, who mounted the most resolute opposition to

1- *Surah al-Ankabut, 29:1-2.*
2- *Surah Qaf, 50:30.*
3- *Surah al-An‘am, 6:37.*

tyranny and injustice. They totally disregarded the tragedies that were poured on their heads by those rulers who were no better than brigands.

Al-Khawarazmi continues:

'Know (may God's mercy be showered on you) that the Umayyads are the accursed tree that is mentioned in the Qur'an and the followers of the rebel Satan. They did all they could to conceal the merits of the testimentary legatee (Imam Ali ‘a); they hired some people to concoct fabrications in the name of hadith and ascribed them to the Prophet (s) and moved to Bayt al-Muqaddas (Jerusalem), leaving Medina.

'To obliterate this affair (i.e. the superiority of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ‘a) they spent large sums of money, and commissioned some individuals to high positions who would carry out the work. However, they could not succeed in burying a single hadith of the God's Apostle (s) or corrupting even one verse of His book, or disguising a single enemy of God as one of His friends. The merits of the Prophet's progeny (‘a) continued to be proclaimed in their midst and the [protagonists of the two sides] would assail one another with arguments.

'The truth is powerful even if its adherents were held in contempt and falsehood is weak even when adorned with sophistry, and odious although its might be concealed under sweet words. Abdurrahman bin Hakam, one of the Umayyads says,

'Sumayya's children have become a multitude

while the daughter of God's Apostle (‘a) has none. '

Another one says,

'May God curse him who reviles Ali and Husayn (‘a).

whether commoner or king.'

Abu Dahbal al-Jumahi says, concerning the characters of Umayyad and Sufyanid rulers,

'The inebriate of the Umayyads enjoy sound sleep

whereas, lying at al-Taff, are slain ones

whose friends know no sleep.'

Sulayman bin Qattah says,

'The Hashimite slain at al-Taff have invited humiliation

on the Muslims, and they have been debased.'

Kumayt bin Ziyad said when he was a neighbour to Khalid bin Abdulla al-Qaysari,

'Say to the Umayyads wherever they may be

even if you fear the sharp Indian sword,

May God starve those you satiated

and satiate those you starved through your injustice!"

In this section, al-Khawarazmi portrays the pains the Umayyads took in order to obliterate the merits of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a). They had employed all the economic and propaganda tools they could muster, and used all the means of terror and intimidation at their disposal in order to efface his name and conceal his merits but to no avail. The merits and feats of Imam Ali had appeared in a way mankind has never known before. On the other hand, his enemies' real nature has become clear to all; they have been shown to be the thieves and brigands they really were. Thus, their efforts came to naught.

Al-Khawarazmi continues:

'A similar case for wonder is the way the poets of the Abbasids proclaimed the truth and expressed their high regard for those whom the rulers disparaged. Mansur bin Zibraqan said in the presence of Harun,

'The Prophet's (s) family and those who love them take to appeasing for fear of being killed.

Christians and Jews are safe, while they [i.e. the Prophet's family] have been ostracized by the nation of monotheism and left in difficulty. '

Di'bil bin Ali, a protégé and poet of the Abbasids[1] says:

'Don't you see me in the span of eighty living in continuous distress,

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1- Di'bil al-Khuza'i was neither protégé nor poet of the Abbasids; he was in fact a poet of the Alids, for whose sake Di'bil suffered untold hardships. I think this slip must have come from the copyist or from al-Khawarazmi himself.

I see the grants that are due to them [i.e. the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*]

distributed among others, while they remain empty-handed.'

Ali bin Abbas al-Rumi, a freed slave (*mawla*) of al-Mu'tasim:

'In every period Prophet Muhammad (s) loses a pure soul who is killed and smeared in [his own] blood.'

Ibrahim bin Abbas al-Suli who was their (the Abbasids') administrator and secretary said to Imam Rida (‘a) when Ma'mun extended his favours to him,'He gives you from your own possessions what is only one out of a hundred.'

How would they (the poets) not disparage a people who were killing their own cousins (the Alids were cousins of the Abbasids) with starvation, while filling the houses of Turks and Daylamites with gold and silver? They would come to the aid of the Maghribis and Farghanids but speak insolently of the Muhajirin and the Ansar. They appointed as ministers the Nabatians of Iraq, gave the Persians and barbaric peoples high offices, while denying the family of Abu Talib (‘a) the legacy of their [grand]mother [Fatima (‘a)] and the booty of their [great]father [Muhammad s]. An Alid would crave a dish but be deprived of it, and seek something appetizing for days on end without getting it, while the land taxes of Egypt and Ahwaz, and the *zakat* of Haramayn (Mecca and Medina) and the Hijaz as a whole, were awarded to bin Abi Maryam al-Madani, Ibrahim al-Mawsuli, Abu Jami' al-Sahmi, Zilzal al-Darib, and Bursuma al-Zamiri. The Christian could feed a whole town through the feudal estate of Bakhtish, and the Turk and Afshin Ashrusan sustain a large number of people through the properties of Bagha.

"Mutawakkil would take 12,000 concubines while a nobleman of the *Ahl al-Bayt* would have to marry a Negro or Sindi woman just to guard his chastity. Choice portions from the proceeds of land tax were spent on displays of effeminate antics, hunters' baits, ape-play fairs, jugglery and given out to [people like] Alawiyah the singer, Zarzar, and the musician Umar bin Banah. They (the Abbasids) begrudged the Fatimids even a single morsel or drink; they would not give them a farthing or a single grain, while paying large sums of money (*badr*): i.e. 10,000 dirhams, for a woman flute-player and give her such amounts that could meet the provisions for a whole army.

"The people for whom *khums* (the one-fifth religious tax) was made lawful and alms unlawful, who it was incumbent upon Muslims to regard with honour and love, were resorting to begging because of want, and dying of poverty. Some of them would pawn their swords or sell their garments [to meet their needs] casting furtive glances on their [misappropriated] booty (*fay'*), while keeping up with the vicissitudes of time with unrelenting fortitude. Their only offence was that their grandfather was the Prophet (s), their mother was Fatima (‘a), their grandmother was Khadija (‘a), their way of life was faith and their guide was the Qur'an."

The previous passage points to the difficulties the Alid noblemen encountered as a result of the economic sanctions that had been imposed on them by the Abbasid clique. So straitened were their conditions that an Alid could hardly find a decent shirt to wear or the plainest food to eat, while government funds were lavishly spent on clowns and singers.

"Indeed the Umayyads committed many vices and infamies. Mu’awiya was the butcher of the companions and the *tabi'un* (the generation that followed that of the Prophet's (s) companions), his mother was the eater of the livers of pure martyrs, his son Yazid maintained the company of apes, kept lynxes, demolished the Kaaba, plundered Medina and killed the Prophet's progeny (‘a), and was responsible for the atrocities of the day of Harrah. Also among them was Marwan, a weakling son of a weakling (*al-wazagh bin al-wazagh*) whose father had been cursed by the Prophet (s) while the former was still in his loins, thus God's curse affected Marwan. Also among them was Abdulmalik [ibn Marwan] who committed the vice, which engulfed the land. That was his appointment of the treacherous Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi, the man who killed God's servants in cold blood, extirpated the pillars [of the community]; the destroyer of the land and the vicious one of the community of Muhammad. Warners had come and traditions related concerning this man.

'Among them was Walid the tyrant who appointed Hajjaj as governor of the east [ern part of the Muslim empire] and Qurrah bin Sharik as administrator of the west[ern part]. Among them also was Sulayman the glutton who surfeited himself to death.Yazid [Muawiya's son], friend of Salama and Habiba, was the one who abolished the jihad

because of wine and spent his rule on playing with the flute and the reed. He was the first to raise income of female singers and openly engage in sin. What could be expected of [a regime with] Marwan on one side and Yazid bin Mu'awiya on the other; it was an accursed one under the influence of the two accursed ones, [it was] steeped in infidelity along with the two infidels. There was also Yusuf bin Umar al-Thaqafi's servant Hisham who killed Zayd bin Ali. Among them also was Walid bin Yazid the profligate of the Marwanids, the disbeliever in the Merciful God, the one who tore up the Qur'an with arrows, the first to compose verses on denial of faith, the one who committed sins openly.'

This passage portrays some of the deadly crimes of the Umayyads, which darkened the face of history. Then al-Khawarazmi closes, his letter by mentioning the atrocities of Abbasid kings saying,

'Despite the enormity, heinousness and manifold nature of these vices, they were indeed trivial when compared to the infamy of the Abbasids who built the city of tyrants and expended Muslims' wealth on amusements and vices. There were the rightly-guided Imams (‘a) who judged with truth and justice, on the basis of which their Friday prayer leaders delivered their sermons, and the daily congregational prayers were performed!'[1]

In these words al-Khawarazmi has related some of the infamies of the Abbasids which were worse than the Umayyads. The former had spent public funds on debauchery while the overwhelming majority of Muslim people suffered from starvation and destitution. The unfortunate thing was that court ulema and some historians have praised them in glowing terms although in reality they had no share of honourable traits or noble spirits.

This is the end of al-Khawarazmi's letter to the Shi'ah of Nishabur.

Taking Recourse to Dissimulation (Taqiyyah)

When the Umayyad and Abbasid authorities stepped up their repression of the Shi'ah, confiscating their properties and aiming at physically extirpating them, the Imams of guidance (‘a.) instructed

1- I have culled this section from my book Hayat al-Imam al-Mahdi (‘a).

their partisans to take recourse to dissimulation (*taqiyyah*). Taqiyyah means to conceal one's beliefs and the truth from those who hold different beliefs, and desisting from divulging what will cause religious or worldly troubles.

The infallible Imams (‘a) have instituted the principle of dissimulation and instructed them to observe it in order to save their lives, because those barbaric executioners had considered it lawful to shed their blood. Had it not been for the practice of dissimulation, nothing would have remained of the Shi'ah, because of the severe repression they had to endure during those dark periods.

The immaculate Imams (‘a) have expressly ordered their partisans to conceal their love for them and hide their doctrines to save themselves and preserve their existence. Imam Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (‘a), instructed the Shi'ah to adhere to dissimulation, and declared in the presence of the Shi'ah, 'Dissimulation is my religion and the religion of my forefathers, and there is no faith with anyone who does not practice dissimulation.'

Certainly, had it not been for this wise strategy, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) would have finished and their school of thought would have been wiped out completely, for Umayyad and Abbasid governments tried hard to remove their name and trace, and put out their light. Shaykh Tusi says, 'No sect or followers of a school of thought were overwhelmed by their opponents and faced persecution the way the Shi'ah did. There was hardly a time when the Shi'ah were free from fear and the necessity of dissimulation. There was almost no time when they were not pursued by the ruler of the day and his clique, who acted on impulse and deviation.'[1]

The fact that the Shi'ah took recourse to dissimulation and concealed their beliefs during those times shows how mature they were in their thinking. In this way, they managed to save their lives and beliefs from their adversaries, monsters who neither feared God nor desisted from violating the sanctity of Muslim blood and possessions.

The antagonists of the Shi'ah extremely criticized them for practicing dissimulation, although this criticism is by no means objective or in

1- Talkhis al-Shafi, 1:59.

tandem with the principles of divine law, which enjoins dissimulation where there is fear of harm. Thus, they deserve no blame for it.

POLITICAL SCHEMES OF THE SHI'AH

Since its inception, Shi'ism has advocated all just political schemes that Islam proclaimed, including human rights and the questions affecting the destiny of humanity.

The Shi'ah have been known for their characteristic opposition to injustice and tyranny and standing up against despots. They took a firm stand vis-à-vis Umayyad and Abbasid kings and considered their rule illegitimate, a position which earned them repression and untold hardships. Below we shall briefly talk about some policy issues that the Shi'ah advocate.

Dispensation of Justice

Dispensation of justice in all its forms is at the forefront of what Islamic laws consider important. The Exalted Lord says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آَمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَآَنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَى أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

"O you who have faith! Be maintainers of justice as witnesses for the sake of God, and ill feeling for a people should never lead you to be unfair. Be fair; that is nearer to God-wariness."[1]

God has not sent forth the noble prophets except for the dispensation of justice among the people. The Exalted said to His noble Prophet [Muhammad (s)],

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1- *Surah al-Maede, 5:8.*

﴿وَقُلْ آَمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ﴾

"....and say, I believe in every Book God has sent down. I have been commanded to do justice among you..."[1]

The Great Prophet (s) says, *"To administer justice for one hour is better than engaging in devotion for seventy years praying all its nights and fasting all its days."*[2] He also said, *'Verily the work that a just leader discharges among his subjects for one day is better than 50 or 100 years of devotion a worshipper will spend, staying away from his family."*[3]

The question of justice is among the fundamental elements of Shi'ite political thought. The Shi'ah had often demanded that Umayyad and Abbasid rule should establish political and social justice among the people and they put up a fierce struggle for that. This attitude and sense of justice was instituted for them by the Commander of the Faithful (‘a.) the great advocate of justice on earth. He says, 'I enjoin you to fear God and act justly towards friend and foe.' During the period of his rule, people witnessed such aspects of justice as never seen before in history. Those fine instances of fairness were among the factors that contributed to the development of political and social conscience in the Islamic world.

Let us reflect on that section of the document which Imam Ali (‘a) wrote for Malik al-Ashtar, when he appointed him governor of Egypt, which says, 'Give God and the people the rights they have against you, your closest kinsmen and those of your subjects toward whom you may be partial. Otherwise, you will be acting unjustly, and whoever is unjust to God's servants [will have to contend with] Him as litigant on their behalf. And whoever God confronts, his proof is refuted and he will be in a state of war with God until he desists [from his actions] or repents. Nothing invites a change in blessings and hastens His wrath more than holding on to injustice; for God answers the prayers of the oppressed, and He is lying in wait for the unjust.'

1- *Surah al-Shura, 42:15*.
2- Jami' al-Sa'adat, 2:219.
3- Abu Ubaydah's al-Amwal, p. 6.

This is pure justice, the blessings of which different peoples enjoy and by which social relations are established on the basis of fair play, eschewing the injustice of officials and those in authority.

Indeed power tempts and no one escapes its noose except those pure souls that have been nourished by Islamic guidance and have faith in the hereafter. This is because power puts a nation's resources in the hands of those in authority, therefore, should they divert from the ways of justice the nation falls into crises and catastrophes.

Revolting against Injustice

Among the principles that the Shi'ah uphold, is their defiance of injustice and struggle against oppressors. Outstanding personalities of this school of thought who lived during the Umayyad and Abbasid rule were the forerunners in confronting injustice. In fact the first to rebel against tyranny and despotism was the eminent companion of the Prophet (s), *Abu Dharr al-Ghifari***,** who was devoted to the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) cause. When Umayyad rulers deviated from the right course, he was the one who boldly raised his voice against them and demanded that they should act with justice and stop misappropriating public funds.

Hijr bin Adiyy was another renown personality who, along with his fellow revolutionaries, revolted against Muawiya, that wily despot of the a Days of Ignorance, who turned Islamic lands into personal estate for himself and his kinsmen, the Umayyads, and others of their agents and cohorts. The provincial government in Kufa arrested Hijr's group and sent them to Syria where they were executed at Maraj Udhra. Those noble men were martyred, laying down their lives for the sake of God and Islam, confronting tyranny and oppression.

Before long, *Imam Husayn (‘a)* raised the banner of uprising against Yazid bin Muawiya, the grandson of Abu Sufyan the first adversary of Islam. The Imam (‘a) criticized him for his total lack of the spirit of reform and excessive crimes and ungodliness.

The Imam (‘a) strove hard to restore the rights where they belonged, eliminate injustice and reestablish a Muslim's honour. He was martyred along with the noble men of his household and his select group of

companions for the sake of dignity, freedom and the will of mankind and other noble causes.

By this glorious uprising, the father of noblemen Imam Husayn (‘a) changed the course of history. He delivered the Muslim from humiliation and misery and opened up the doors of struggle and honour. Later, *his grandsons and those of his brother Imam Hasan (‘a)* launched successive revolts, by which they rammed the fortresses of Umayyad oppressors, until they razed their strongholds to the ground and finally finished off their dominion.

Barely three days after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a), *Abdullah bin Afif al-Azdi* revolted against the criminal terrorist bin Marjana [Ubaydullah bin Ziyad] when the latter was addressing the people in the mosque of Kufa. bin Marjana was merry and gloating over his so-called victory by killing the lord of the martyrs. He had hardly completed a few statements when this brave man rose up and said: "O liar, son of the liar are you and your father, and the one who appointed you and his father, O slave of Banu Ilaj! Have you killed the sons of the Prophet (s) and ascended the pulpit of the Muslims? Where are the sons of the Muhajirin and the Ansar? Let them take vengeance on you and your tyrant [master], the accursed son of the accursed (alluding to Yazid and his father Muawiya), who were cursed on the tongue of the trustworthy Prophet (s)." These words descended like a thunderbolt on the head of bin Marjana. They portrayed the people's sentiment and deep sorrow on account of the murdering of the lord of the martyrs (‘a) and also exposed the real nature of that monster, the wickedest creature on earth.

Among the outstanding Shi'ah who revolted against injustice was *Kumayt bin Ziyad al-Asadi* who showed his indignation at Umayyad rule through his overflowing poetry which was among the best pieces of revolutionary literature that has been directed at the Umayyads.

Kumayt says:

'Say to the Umayyads wherever they are,

Even if you fear the sharp swords.

Woe unto a time in which I appease and obey you.

May God starve the people you satiated

And satiate those who starve because of your oppression.

A time which curses its unique one openly

Had the Hashimite extended his just rule

Over the people (including their) profligate ones

Their life would have been like springtide.

And in all battles the Hashimite would have been

Like a lion that does not retreat,

In guiding the people aright he was most able.

He would set aright their affairs and defend them,

And make their sterile lands ever productive'.

In these verses, Kumayt has cursed the Umayyads and prayed for the end of their rule. He also wished that the matchless Hashimite should take charge of Muslim affairs and correct the wrongs in their worldly and religious matters, save them from catastrophes, and establish justice among them till he turns their despondent lives into productive ones.

Kumayt also satirized the tyrant Hisham in these words:

He said the right thing on the wooden post (i.e. the pulpit)

But on descending he did the wrong thing.

Our words are the words of the Prophet (s) while

Our actions are akin to the Days of Ignorance.

The Umayyads tyrannized Kumayt, often threw him into jail and tortured him but this did not dissuade from struggling and maintaining his beliefs.

Another man who confronted injustice and held the Umayyads in contempt was *Farazdaq***.** This appeared in is his panegyrics for Imam Zayn al-Abidin [Ali bin al-Husayn (‘a)] and his disparaging of Hisham bin Abdulmalik, who feigned ignorance of the Imam's (‘a) station when the people thronged to seek his blessing as he went round the Kaaba. When the Syrians asked Hisham who the Imam (‘a) was and he replied that he did not know, Farazdaq exploded, rebuking Hisham and introducing the Imam:

'This is the one whose tread al-Batha' knows well,

The House, its holy precincts and beyond, all know him.

This is the son of the best of God's servants;

This is the most pious, pure and chaste nobleman.

Your saying, 'who is this' does him no harm;'

The Arabs, the non-Arabs, all know the one you deny.

Farazdaq fell into disfavour and faced the wrath of Hisham, who even sent him to prison. Farazdaq lampooned Hisham saying:

'He turns a head; not the head of a chief,

But squinty eyes, the defect of which is quite evident.'

Certainly, Hisham's head was not that of a chief but that of a bloodthirsty vagabond who shed the blood of Muslims and coerced them into acting against their wishes. Hisham's misdeeds made the great martyr *Zayd bin Ali* to revolt against his rule, and consequently lay down his life for God's sake.

During the Abbasid period *Di'bil al-Khuza'i* one of the most famous Arab poets, revolted and expressed his indignation at Abbasid rule that was no less oppressive and deviant, from what was right and just, than Umayyad rule. This eminent poet satirized Rashid, Amin, Ma'mun, and Ibrahim son of Mahdi. Lampooning Mu'tasim, Di'bil says:

'Then came to power a misguided leader;

He had no religion and he had no sense.

Abbasid kings were seven, as recorded in the books,

They did not mention an eighth.

The people of the Cave were also seven; all honourable men,

Their eighth, being a dog

I would place their dog above you in position

Because you are a sinner while it was sinless'.

This scathing lampoon attacks the injustice that prevailed and was an outburst of the Islamic spirit. Di'bil's fervent ridicule of the Abbasids stems from his attachment to Islamic values and support for the rights of the wronged and oppressed, whom the Abbasid governments always despised. Di'bil's heroic stands included his lampooning of Ma'mun when the latter carried Imam Rida's (‘a) body to bury it near that of his

father. Ma'mun was asked why he was doing that, he answered, 'That God may forgive Harun's sins because of his proximity to Imam Rida (‘a)', upon which Di'bil answered him, saying:

'Squat by the tomb of the pure one at Tus
If you will do so out of desire for religion.
Nearness to the chaste will naught avail the filthy,
Nor the proximity of the sinful harm the chaste one.
Never! Everybody will be held for his own deeds,
So do or refrain from whatever you like.
Two graves in Tus, one for the best of men
And the other for the worst, what a lesson!'[1]

When the people accepted *Ibrahim bin Shaklah* the chief of the singers as caliph and he was unable to pay the salaries of the servicemen, he sent his messenger to tell the people that he had no money with him. On hearing that some witty person immediately stood up and replied, 'Instead of the money let the caliph come out and sing three tones for the people on one side and three tones for those on the other.[2] *Di'bil* versified this episode, saying:

'O you soldiers despair not; be pleased with
What has happened, and do not be angry.
You will soon be given affections which
Both the bearded and the beardless will enjoy.
And your officers will have melodies which
Neither enter the purse nor can be tied up.
Thus does the caliph whose book is the drum,
Give his officers' provisions.

He has sealed the book of your provisions and maintains a strong intent, so do not get enraged.

The fealty to Ibrahim is an ominous one;

1- Hayat al-Imam al-Rida, p. 2.
2- Wafayat al- A'yan, 1: 21.

The people will either be killed or starved under him.'[1]

Indeed Shi'ite history is replete with feats and struggles against oppressors and despots. al-*Wardi* says:

'The Shi'ah were the first group to launch the intellectual revolution in Islam. The revolutionary spirit is interlaced in their worldview; the doctrine of the Imamate in which the Shi'ah believe prompts them to criticize and confront the ruling class in all phases of their history. Based on this doctrine they considered every government, of whatever nature, to be an unjust usurper, except where an infallible Imam (‘a) was at the helm. Therefore, the Shi'ah have been engaged in unflagging perpetual revolution.'[2]

The uprisings launched by the Shi'ah during Umayyad and Abbasid rule, and the acerbic criticism their chiefs directed at those kings, only echoed their doctrine of social justice, whose aim was to curb social fraud and remove all forms of injustice and corruption from the face of the earth. It can rightly be said that, of all the schools of social justice, the Shi'ah are the keenest in defending truth and justice.[3]

Equality

The issue of equality is among the fundamental concepts upheld by the Shi'ah, following the footsteps of their great Imams whose behaviour was an embodiment of the Islamic ideal, who gave the people practical models in that regard. Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a.) freed a female slave of his and then married her. Capitalizing on this, Abdulmalik bin Marwan criticized the Imam and even wrote him a letter rebuking him:

'I have heard that you have married your [freed] slave, but you know that there are Quraysh ladies who are your match, by marrying whom you would be honoured and get [worthy] offspring. However, you have neither considered your [honour] nor preserved that of your children. Peace.'

1- Asr al-Ma'mun, 3:255-256.
2- Wu"az al Salatin, p. 293.
3- Hayat Imam al-Baqir, 2th ed. P.2:114.

When the Imam read the letter and saw, in it, the spirit and customs of pre-Islamic ignorance (*jahiliyyah*) he replied to Abdulmalik outlining the Islamic principles on the issue of marital relations, saying,

'I have received your letter in which you chided me for marrying my freed slave, claiming that there are Quraysh ladies by marrying whom I would be honoured and who would give me [worthy] children. However, you should know that there is no honour or nobility above that of the Apostle of God (s) [and he has married his freed slave]. She was my property but she regained her freedom because of an affair, which by God, the Mighty and Sublime, has decreed and concerning which I have sought His reward. Then I took her into wedlock (lit. by way of His established norm). He who is pure with regard to his religion is free from harm, for through Islam, God has obliterated lowliness and removed defect and blame. Therefore, there is no blame on a Muslim; the only blame is that arising from *jahiliyyah* mentality.'[1]

By these words, the Imam showed his Umayyad opponent the real honour that Islam advocates, that is, fear of God and obedience to Him. And how could the Imam's marriage to a pure chaste Muslim slave whom he had freed be considered a blemish while he had not thereby contravened the dictates of the Book of God or the precedent of His prophet? *Islam has made the Muslim man an equal for the Muslim woman; neither of the two is superior to the other whatever their lineage might be. The Apostle of God (s) had married the daughter of his maternal aunt whose mother was a daughter to Abd al-Muttalib, the chief the Quraysh, to his servant and freed slave Zayd bin Harithah, and in that way checked the evils of ancestral arrogance.*

Indeed, *the Prophet (s) declared that pride over lineage was part of the jahiliyyah customs which Islam had cancelled. He says' 'All of you are children of Adam and Adam was made from earth, so let those people who take pride in their forefathers desist from that or else they will become meaner than dung beetles in the sight of God.'*[2]

The Prophet (s) also said:

1- Al-Nizam al-Siysasi fi al-Islam, 2nd ed. p.206-7.
2- Tafsir bin Kathir chapter of al-Hujurat.

'O you people! God has removed from you the blemish of *jahiliyyah* and its custom of taking pride in ancestors. Mankind is made up of *two types* of people*: pious, God-fearing ones, who are honoured in the sight of God the Exalted, and sinful ones, whom He damns.'*[1]

Islam has instituted the principles of equality based on innate human nature without discriminating against any nation; the only distinction recognized being that accruing from God-wariness and good works. *Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a)* says:

'God has created paradise for him who obeys Him even if he were an Ethiopian slave, and created hell fire for him who disobeys Him even if he were a chief from the Quraysh.' It is worth mentioning that one of the factors responsible for the people's betrayal of the Commander of the faithful (‘a) when he fought Mu’awiya bin Abi Sufyan, was his equal treatment of the Muslims without preferring the Arabs to others. bin Abbas had requested the Imam to give preference to the Arabs over the *mawali* (non-Arab Muslims, mostly Persians, who were supposed to be under the patronage of Arab families) and the Quraysh over other Arab clans, in terms of pensions and other distinctions. The Imam rebuked him and said,

'O bin Abbas! You are requesting me to seek victory through injustice! If the wealth was mine, I would still give them equally, now much more, that it is God's.' In any case, the equality that is part of Shi'ite political schemes which are part and parcel of the Islamic political system involves social equality, equality before the law, equality of rights, employment, taxation, etc. We have discussed these issues at length in my book al-*Nizam al-Siyasi fi al-Islam.*

Muslim Unity

The Shi'ah believe in the necessity of Muslim unity and harmony in all spheres of their existence so that they may become a strong force that would be out of reach of external powers that might have their eyes on them, and no oppressor or colonial power would dare attack Muslim lands. In fact, Muslims have never encountered a greater and more severe regression than what their disunity and conflict has caused them.

1- Al-Nizam al-Siyasi fi al-Islam, p.207.

The question of Muslim unity is among the most fundamental issues that the Shi'ah advocate. The Imams of guidance (‘a.) called for unity and considered it among the principal ingredients of the Islamic way of life. The Commander of the Faithful, *Ali (‘a)*, who was the closest person to the Apostle of God (s), his brother and helper, the gate of his city of knowledge, the husband of his daughter (Fatima (‘a)), the father of his two grandsons and the most entitled to succeed him, exercised patience when the people swore allegiance to Abu Bakr as the caliph. He said, 'I feared that if I did not support Islam and its people, it might encounter a breach or [even] destruction.'

When his right was usurped, Imam Ali (‘a) bore it with a thorn in the flesh, so that Islam should not suffer any breach or destruction.

Imam Hasan (‘a) the grandson of the Apostle of God (s) concluded a peace treaty with Mu’awiya the arch enemy of Islam, in order to preserve Muslim Unity. Had he not accepted the treaty, nothing would have remained of Islam.

Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a)'s family was murdered by the Umayyads. They also hounded his partisans wherever they were, openly reviled the pure progeny from the pulpits and applied every propaganda tool to disparage them but he turned away from all that and even used to pray for the success of Muslim forces that fought under the command of his enemies. Part of his supplications reads,

'O God, bless Muhammad and the household of Muhammad, and increase their (i.e. the soldiers of Islam) number, sharpen their arms, guard their territory, defend their quarters, unite their multitudes, manage their affairs, make copious their supplies, make sufficient their provisions, support them with [Your] help, back them up with patience, make subtle their stratagem,…'

In another section he said:

'O God, empower thereby the stations of Muslims, fortify their lands, make their wealth bear fruit, disengage them from fighting the enemy so that they may worship You, and relieve them from engaging the enemy, that they may engage themselves in your communion till none other than You is adored in all the quarters of the earth.'

Indeed Imam Zayn al-Abidin prayed for the success of the Islamic forces that served under Umayyad rule because of his desire for Muslim unity and the preservation of Muslim power and mettle, disregarding, for the sake of the common good of the Islamic world, all the abominable crimes and tortures that those forces had perpetrated against the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and their partisans.

The uprising of Imam Husayn (‘a) against the rule of Yazid bin Mu’awiya the despot, was also carried out for the sake of Islam and Muslim unity. That cunning profligate had perpetrated all sorts of crimes. He even openly declared his infidelity in these words, '..no news has come (from heaven) and no revealation has descended.' Therefore religious duty demanded that the beloved one of the Apostle of God (s) i.e. Imam Husayn (‘a) should rise and fight against Yazid with all the power at his disposal, to salvage the Muslims from the woes they had to contend with under the rule of Yazid, his father, grandfather and other kinsmen.

Among all Muslim groups, the Shi'ah, have always been the most desirous of the unity and solidarity of the Islamic world.

Decency of the Governing Apparatus

Among the basic aspects of the political programme as envisaged by the Shiah, is that the ruling establishment should be decent and free from thieves and perfidious elements, who entertain no fear of God. The system must be run by the best hands in terms of capability and reliability to avoid any rifts and crises arising between the people and their government. In his document of appointment, which he wrote for Malik Ashtar the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (‘a) stressed the importance of appointing to public posts, people who were righteous, noble and having a sense of religious responsibility. He said, 'Consider the issue of your officials; appoint them only on selection, not on account of mutual love between you and them or because of your personal preferences, for they (state officials) are often prone to injustice and treachery.'[1] Selecting the right people for public office and guarding against favouritism is a paramount condition for a sound government; should this be disregarded by giving government posts to

1- Muhammad Abduh's edition of Imam Ali's (‘a) Nahj al-Balaghah, 3:105.

cronies and kinsmen, the country would face corruption and civil disturbances.

In that document, Imam Ali (‘a) says: 'In appointing your officers and staff never accept any mediation except that of competence and reliability.'

This means that appointment to public office should be based on competence and trust, and not on sentimental grounds, that have no bearing on the common good. It has been related that the Prophet (s) said:

'Whoever seeks to lead a Muslim people while knowing that there is, among them, a more appropriate person, has indeed betrayed God, His Apostle and the Muslims.'[1]

The bane of this society throughout its historical epochs has been largely caused by those who acquired power through force, shoving aside the people who were talented, competent and experienced in state matters; for example, the Umayyads and Abbasids seized power and at the expense of the Alid nobles who advocated social justice in Islam.

Anyway, it is proper precaution to preserve the community's integrity so that anyone who seeks or covets a sensitive government post should not be assigned it. This is to preclude their misusing this position to enrich themselves.The Prophet (s) 'By God, we do not entrust this work to anyone who asks for it or covets it.'

Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) had put this principle into practice during his rule; he did not appoint to a government post, any persons with political ambition. This was the reason why Talhah and Zubayr rebelled against his government. They had requested him to make them governors of Basra and Kufa, respectively but he refused, so they revolted. Then the Imam summoned his minister and adviser Abdullah bin Abbas and asked him, 'Have you heard what these two men have said?' 'Yes', replied bin Abbas. 'What is your opinion?', asked the Imam (‘a). 'I think they want leadership, so appoint Zubayr governor of Basra and Talhah governor of Kufa'

1- Sunan al-Bayhaqi, 10:11.

The Imam (‘a) replied, saying, 'Woe unto you! Surely, there are men and resources in Basra and Kufa [lit. the two Iraqis], and should these two men possess the two cities they would win over the fool with allurements, strike the weak with tribulations and overpower the strong by force. If I should ever engage anyone because of their harm or utility, I would have engaged Mu’awiya as governor of Sham. But for the covetousness for leadership which they have manifested, I would have had a different opinion of them.'

Indeed, the Imam (‘a) had taken extreme precautions with respect to the issue of appointing governors and other public officials, as a result of which the Umayyads and the Quraysh in general, who would not obey his rule except where their interests were served, declared war on him.

These are some of the policies which the Shi'ah upheld. This shows how developed the thinking of this sect was, which struggled against oppression and injustice and worked to establish equity among the people.

FOUNDATIONS FOR EDIFICATION AND MORALS IN SHI'ISM

The Shi'ah possess a wealth of glowing programmes for morality and education, which the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a.) have furnished and prepared them with, to become a good source of emulation in terms of behaviour and manners, for the followers of other Islamic sects.

Indeed, the real meaning of Shi'ism is to emulate the immaculate Imams (‘a.) in their God-wariness, piety and great sensitivity on matters of religion. Should anyone who claims to be their partisan slip off the straight path, contradict the commands of God the Exalted and fall into sin, it would be simply inaccurate to call such a person a Shi'ite. The right term to describe such a person would be 'an admirer of the *Ahl al-Bayt*' (‘a.). A saying that is attributed to Imam Hasan (‘a.) the beloved grandson of the Apostle of God (s), supports this. When someone called on him and said, 'O son of God's Apostle! I am one of your *shi'ah* (partisans)', he replied, 'O servant of God! If you obey our commands and refrain from our prohibitions, then you have said the truth, otherwise you will gain nothing by claiming a noble position that you do not deserve. Do not say, 'I am one of your *shi'ah*', rather you should say, 'I am one of your friends and admirers who are hostile to your enemies', and (with that) you will have goodness now and in the future.'[1]

Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a.) said to one of his partisans, 'Tell our *shi'ah* that nothing will avail them before God, and loyalty to us is not attained except with piety.'[2]

Refraining from what God has prohibited is among the foremost qualities required of the *Ahl al-Bayt's* (‘a) partisans so that they may be a source of delight for their patrons on the Day of Judgment, as well as

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1- Hayat al-Imam al-Hasan (‘a), 3rd ed. 1:359.
2- Hayat al-Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a), 1st ed. 1:68.

an adornment for the latter's cause in this world. The firmest bond with the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a.) is secured by following their schemes, living according to their teachings and giving less regard to worldly matters, as they were wont to. Imam al-Rida (‘a.) enjoins his *shi'ah* saying, 'O people! Fear God concerning the blessings He has bestowed on you.Do not repel it by disobeying Him.'[1]

The fear of God is among the most important spiritual foundations that shield mankind from committing sin.This is the admonition of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a.) to Amr bin Sa'id:

'I enjoin you to have the fear of God, to be truthful, pious and diligent. Know that there is no benefit in diligence without piety. Beware of coveting the position of those above you (in terms of worldly matters). It suffices to consider what God the Exalted has said to His Apostle (s), *"So let not their wealth and children impress you"*[2] and *"Do not extend your glance toward what We have provided certain groups of them as a glitter of the life of this world."*[3]If you fear that you cannot live up to that, remember the life of God's Apostle (s); his meals (were prepared from) barley, dates served as his sweets and his bedding was made of palm leaves whenever he could find them. When a calamity befalls you remember the calamity that has befallen you on account of the demise of God's Apostle, for the creatures have never suffered the like of it.'[4]

This admonition carries fine pieces of advice which can help mankind lead blissful and pleasant lives, and maintain strong bonds with the Creator.

Below we shall briefly mention some examples of the educational and moral teachings of the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*, which are in essence, Islamic precepts that have prepared for mankind the dynamic programmes that are necessary for their reform and happiness.

Mutual Compassion

The Imams of Guidance have also urged their partisans as well as other Muslims to have love and compassion among themselves. Imam al-

1- Hayat al-Imam al-Rida (‘a), 2:77.
2- *Sura al- Tawbah, 9:55.*
3- *Sura Ta Ha, 20:131.*
4- Rawdat al-Kafi, p.168.

Sadiq (‘a.) says, "Fear God and be kind brothers who love one another for the sake of God. Maintain close relations and kindness. Exchange visits, meet one another, discuss our affair, and keep it alive."[1]

One of the loftiest teachings of Islam is the command to spread love among the Muslims, so that they may form a united force in their own defense. The Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) have urged the Shi'ah and Muslims in general to apply this teaching in their lives. Imam Sadiq (‘a) has said, 'It is imperative that Muslims should endeavour to maintain close relationships and cooperation, extend support to the poor and observe mutual kindness, until you become what God has commanded you to be: 'and merciful among themselves.' You should be merciful toward one another and worried about what is concealed to you of their (the Muslims') [sad] affairs, as the Ansar did during the time of God's Apostle (s).'[2]

These brilliant teachings ensure the community's happiness, solidarity and glory.

Visiting One Another

The Imams (‘a) have exhorted their partisans to visit one another because it fosters love and brotherhood. The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) says:

'Meeting ones brethren is a great boon even if they are few.'

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) said to Khaythamah, 'Greet those of our partisans that you meet and exhort them to fear God Almighty. Tell the rich among them to relate to the poor and the strong to the weak. Let the living attend the funeral of the dead. Let them be meetings in their houses, for their gathering keeps alive our affair. May God have mercy on him who keeps alive our affair.'[3]

Imam Sadiq (‘a) once said while speaking with some of his *shi'ah*, 'Exchange visits, for in visiting one another there is a revitalizing of your hearts and a mention of our sayings, and our sayings instill mutual affection in you. If you follow them you will be guided and saved, but

1- Usul al-Kafi, 2:475.
2- Usul al-Kafi, 2:475.
3- Ibid.

if you discard them you will stray and be ruined, so hold fast to them and I stand surety for your salvation.'[1]

There many more narrations that have come down from the Imams of Guidance (‘a) which enjoin the Shi'ah to exchange visits and observe mutual compassion because this is the surest way to unity and love.

Providing for others

Among the moral and edifying teachings of the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) is providing for people in need as this is one of the most effective means of enhancing Muslims' ties. Safwan al-Jammal a prominent Shi'ite has narrated, 'I was with Abu Abdullah Sadiq (‘a) when a man from Mecca by name Maymun came to him and complained of the difficulty he was facing in hiring a means of transport. The Imam (‘a) said to me, 'Stand up and help your brother."

Safwan went with the man and met his needs, and on returning, the Imam was the first to speak, saying, 'What have you done with regard to your brother's need?' 'God has fulfilled it, may my father and mother be your ransom,' he replied.

This so gladdened the Imam that he said to Safwan, 'Certainly, helping your Muslim brother is preferable to me than going round the house (i.e. the Kaaba) for a week in supererogatory devotion.'

Thus, the Imam (‘a) continued talking about the merits of fulfilling the needs of Muslims, saying, 'A man came to Hasan bin Ali (‘a) and said: 'May my father and mother be your ransom, help me,' (in some matter) upon which he put on his sandals and went with him, passing by Husayn bin Ali (‘a) who was standing in prayer. Hasan (‘a) said to the man, 'Why did you not ask him (i.e. Husayn) to help you in your need?' 'I was told that he was in *i'tikaf* (a form of devotion in which one keeps to the mosque). Then Hasan said, 'Surely, to help you was better for him than spending a month in *itikaf*.'[2]

Plenty of narrations have been related on how the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) stressed on the importance of fulfilling the needs of fellow Muslims,

1- Al-Nizam al-Siyasi fi al-Islam, p.222.
2- Usul al-Kafi, 2:159.

because it acts as a spur to love and harmony that result in social cohesion.

Assisting the distressed

Assisting Muslims in distress is another aspect of the teachings of the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*. Imam Sadiq (‘a) says: 'Whoever assists a Muslim in distress, God will relieve him of the sorrows of the hereafter and he will come out of his grave with delight. Whoever satiates him of hunger, God will feed him out of the fruits of paradise, and he who gives him a drink, God will let him drink of the 'sealed wine'.[1-2] A number of narrations attest to the fact that the Imam (‘a) placed much importance on this matter. He says, 'Any believer who relieves another of his sorrows while he himself being in difficulty, God will facilitate for him the means of fulfilling his needs in this world and the next. And he who conceals a believer's fault, the divulging of which he is apprehensive, God will cover for him seventy faults of this and the next world. God is in support of the believer as long as he is in support of his brother, so avail yourselves of admonition and aspire for goodness.'

Imam Baqir (‘a) says, 'Surely the deed that God likes best is making the believers happy.'

Imam Rida (‘a) says, 'Whoever relieves a believer [of a distress] God will relieve his heart [of calamities] on the Day of Resurrection.'[3]

Such narrations have been widely transmitted from the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a), enjoining the Muslims to assist one another and this should naturally make the society live in harmony.

Forbidding the causes of discord

The Imams of Guidance (‘a) have forbidden the Shi'ah to indulge in acts that can lead to dissention and antagonism. Such acts include:

1. Estrangement

Forbidding the Shi'ah from severing their relations, Imam Sadiq (‘a) warns them, saying, 'No two men should ever be estranged to each

1- *Surah al-Mutaffifin, 83:25.*
2- Al-Nizam al-Siyasi fi al-Islam, p.195.
3- Ibid, p. 196.

other but one of them would deserve repudiation and curse. They might both deserve this treatment.' On hearing this Mu'tab said to him, 'May God make me your ransom, this is for the one who wrongs, so, what about the wronged?' The Imam (‘a) replied him: 'Because he neither invited his brother for rapprochement nor overlooked his [offending] words. I have heard my father (‘a) say, 'When two people fall into disagreement, exchanging invectives, let the wronged party approach his opponent and say to him, 'Brother! I am the one who is wrong', so that he may reverse their estrangement, for God, Blessed and Exalted is His name, is a just judge who will surely take back the rights of the wronged from the unjust.'[1]

There is a number of narrations from the Imams (‘a) which frown at estrangement and enjoin good relations so that the spirit of brotherhood will prevail among Muslims.

2. Lack of Cooperation

The Imams disliked that Muslims should lack cooperation. Imam Baqir (‘a): 'Whoever withholds assistance from his Muslim brother, refusing to meet his needs, God will cause him to be afflicted by having to render help to a person whose assistance would be a sin and never rewarded.'[2]

Imam Sadiq (‘a) said to his companions in an agonizing and furious mood: 'What is wrong with you that you despise us?' upon which a man from Khorasan immediately said, 'God forbid that we should ever hold you or anything that pertains to you in contempt!' Then the Imam (‘a) replied angrily, 'You are one of those who despised us!' 'God save me that I should ever despise you', the man said. 'Woe on to you', the Imam (‘a) continued, 'When we were at Juhfa, didn't you hear a man saying to you, 'convey me for a mile, for I am worn out'? By God, you did not so much as raise your head. Surely, you have despised us, for whoever despises a believer has despised us and violated the sanctity of God, the Mighty and Sublime.'[3]

1- Usul al-Kafi, 2:257.
2- Ibid. 2:272.
3- Wasa'il al Shi'ah, the book of hajj.

Speaking to his s*hi'ah*, Imam Abu al-Hasan (‘a) said, 'Whoever is approached by one of his brethren seeking protection in some situation but refuses him support despite being able to oblige, has indeed severed the bond of loyalty to God, the Mighty and Sublime.'

Many similar brilliant hadiths have been reported from the Imams, warning Muslims not to disregard cooperation so that they may maintain their ties of love and friendship.

3. Offending and Humiliating

A number of reports that come down from the Imams prohibit the offending and humiliating of others. Imam Sadiq (‘a) says, 'Whoever humiliates and despises a believer because of his poverty and paucity of means, God will disgrace him publicly on the Day of Judgment.'[1]

In another hadith he says, 'Whoever despises a believer, whether a destitute or otherwise, God the Mighty and Sublime, will despise and hate him till he desists from his action.'[2]

Indeed, only evil souls that have no regard for human and other higher values offend and look down on others; and this is why the Imams (‘a) warn Muslims of these bad traits.

4. Terrorizing the People

The Imams prohibit terrorizing the people, which is a heinous crime forbidden by Islam. Imam Sadiq (‘a) says, 'Whoever terrorizes a believer in the name of the ruler, that the latter may ill treat him, his abode will be hellfire even if the ruler does not molest him. Whoever terrorizes a believer by means of the ruler, that the latter may molest him and he does, his abode will be hellfire in the company of Pharoah and his people.'[3]

This and similar hadiths of the Imams (‘a) clearly show the unlawfulness of terrorizing the people because it destroys the social life of the Islamic community.

1- Usul al-Kafi, 2:263.
2- Al-Nizam al-Siyasi fi al-Islam, p.223.
3- Al-Nizam al-Siyasi fi al-Islam, p.223.

5. Reviling

In many hadiths the Imams (‘a) proscribe reviling and inveighing and enjoin the Shi'ah to eschew these practices because they cause enmity and hatred among the people, which are antithetical to Islam's call for friendship and sincerity. Imam Abu Ja'far (‘a) said that a man came to the Prophet (s) and asked him to admonish him. Part of the admonishment was 'Do not revile people lest you earn their enmity.' He also said: 'No one calls a believer's eye defective but suffers the worst form of death, and deserves not to return to any good.'[1]

6. Fault-finding

Being a blameworthy trait which engenders meanness and dishonor among the people, the Imams warn Muslims to beware of fault-finding and disclosing people's weaknesses. Imam Muhammad Baqir (‘a) has said, 'The nearest thing to unbelief is for one to befriend someone in the name of religion to know his failings, so that he may one day blackmail him.'[2]

7. Denigration

To preserve Muslim unity, the Imams disallowed the act of disparaging one another as we find in many of their narrations. Imam Sadiq (‘a) says: 'He who treats one of his brethren in an upbraiding manner God will upbraid him in this and the next worlds.' It has been reported that the Prophet (s) has said, 'Whoever publishes [someone's] sin is no better than its perpetrator, and whoever disgraces a believer on account of a fault, he will not die till he perpetrates the same fault.'[3]

8. Vainglory

Among the things against which the great Imams have cautioned the people was ancestral pride, a practice that threatens the unity of the Muslim body politic. In Islamic divine law human beings are equal like the teeth of the comb; no one is superior to another except by virtue of piety and good deeds.

1- Usul al-Kafi, 2:269.
2- Wasa'il al Shi'ah, 8:495.
3- Al-Nizam al-Siyasi fi al-Islam,p. 3-5.

When Uqbah bin Bashir al-Asadi, a notable personality of his time, had the honour of meeting Imam Abu Ja'far Baqir (‘a) he introduced himself and his lineage to the Imam (‘a) and was taking pride in it. He said, 'I am Uqbah bin Bashir al-Asadi, I hail from a noble line of my tribe.'

The Imam (‘a) replied him saying, 'Do not count your lineage as an honor before us. God has raised through faith the one whom the people used to consider lowly if he be faithful, and debased because of unbelief, the one whom they regard noble, if he be an unbeliever. No one has any superiority over another save through piety.'

Islam has raised the position of believers and the pious even though they may be weak in terms of possessions and lineage, because Islam does not recognize status based on ancestry. Similarly, the faithless and tyrants are looked upon as lowly even if they occupied high social positions.

Imam Sadiq's (‘a) letter to the Shi'ah

Imam Sadiq (‘a) wrote a letter containing valuable pieces of advice to his partisans in which he commanded them to study it often and apply its recommendations. They used to place it in their prayer niches in their houses and study it after their prayers.

Here are some excerpts from it. The Imam (‘a) started by saying: 'Pray to your Lord for your wellbeing. Take to equanimity, gentleness and modesty. Refrain from what the pious ones before you have refrained from. 'After mentioning some pieces of advice, he continued, 'Beware of arrogance before God. Know that a servant is never afflicted with arrogance before God but he becomes arrogant toward His religion. Therefore, be steadfast for God's sake and do not renege [on your religion] lest you become losers. May God protect you and us against pride before Him. We have no strength save from God.'[1]

The Imam (‘a) has cautioned them against pride which is among the worst, basest traits a man can be afflicted with. Pride is the springhead of many crimes and catastrophes that bedevil human society.

Another section of this letter reads:

1- Ashi 'ah min Balaghat al-Imam al-Sadiq (‘a), p. 101-111.

'Instill patience within yourselves for tribulations in this world, for the succession of trials in it coupled with steadfastness in obedience to God, loyalty to Him, and to those for whom He has enjoined loyalty, will have a better outcome in the eyes of God than to have the kingdom of this world, even if its blessings, glitters and opulence abide for long, while one lives in sin and loyalty to those for whom God has forbidden His servant to show loyalty and obedience.

'God has enjoined loyalty to the Imams (‘a), whom He described in His Book saying:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا﴾

"And We made them Imams, guiding by Our command."[1]

And it is to them that God enjoined loyalty and obedience. Those for whom God has forbidden loyalty and obedience are the leaders in deviation, for whom God has decreed that they will have worldly preponderance over His friends, the Imams from the Family of Muhammad (s). They will conduct their kingdom in sinning against God and His Apostle (s), so that they may deserve the decree of punishment, and so that God's command by which He created them from the beginning of creation, that is, their unbelief, which went forth in God's knowledge, should come to pass. Those are the people He mentioned in His Book in these terms,

﴿وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ﴾

"We made them leaders who invite to the Fire".[2]

In this section the Imam (‘a) instructs his *shi'ah* to have patience in the face of worldly tribulations and persevere in their obedience to God and His friends, the immaculate Imams (‘a), the bearers of the message and custodians of the Prophet's (s) knowledge, those, whom He tried with having to bear with the leaders of tyranny and deviation of their time.

Another section of the letter reads,

1- *Surah al-Anbia, 21:73.*
2- *Surah al-Qasas, 28:41.*

'O felicitous party that has been shown mercy! God the Exalted has completed for you the good He has given you. Know that it is neither in God's knowledge nor command that anyone among His creation should follow desire, opinion or analogy with regard to His religion. God has revealed the Qur'an, set in it the explanation of all things and assigned authorities on it and its learning. The authorities on the Qur'an to whom God has given its knowledge are not allowed to approach it through desire, personal opinion or analogy. He has made them needless of that by virtue of its knowledge with which He has endowed them and made them custodian to the exclusion of all others, and by virtue of the honour He has bestowed on them.

'They are the People of the Remembrance (*ahl al-dhikr*) whom God has commanded this nation to ask. They are the people that when anyone asks them, they will guide and give him from the Qur'anic learning that with which he will be guided to God by His leave, and to all the ways of truth. No one will loathe them and the knowledge with which God has honoured them and made custodian, and detest asking them of it, except he whose wretchedness has preceded in God's knowledge in His decree at the beginning of creation under the canopies [of the Throne].

'Those who dislike asking the People of Remembrance, are the people who follow their desires, opinions and analogies, till Satan enters them. They consider as infidels those whom God designates as believers, and they term believers those, whom He calls deviants. They make unlawful many a thing that God has declared lawful and lawful many things that God has forbidden; this is the main outcome of following their desires. The Apostle of God (s) had made a covenant before his demise, but they said, 'after God has taken away His Apostle who left his covenant with us which he commanded us to fulfill, we shall disobey God, the Exalted and His Apostle.'

Here the Imam alludes to the deviation into which the nation slipped as a consequence of their disregard for the Prophet's (s) will which stipulated that they should follow his progeny after him and make preparations to facilitate the spiritual and temporal leadership of Ali, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) and the chief of the Prophet's (s) family.

In another place the letter reads,

'Pray to God very often, for God loves that His faithful servants should pray to Him and He has promised that He will answer them. On the Day of Resurrection God will transform the prayers of believers into pious deeds that will increase [their stations] in paradise. Therefore, remember God as frequently as you can at night and by day because God the Exalted has enjoined frequent remembrance of Him. God remembers whoever among the believers remembers Him, and you should know that no believing servant of His mentions Him but He speaks well of him. So strive to serve God and obey Him, because nothing is attained of the goodness that is with God except by obeying Him and refraining from the prohibitions which He has stipulated in the Qur'an outwardly and inwardly. God the Exalted has said:

﴿وَذَرُوا ظَاهِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ الْإِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَقْتَرِفُونَ﴾

"Renounce outward sins and the inward ones."[1]

And you should know that which God has commanded them (i.e. those addressed in the Qur'an) to renounce has been prohibited by Him.

'Follow the footsteps of God's Apostle (s) and his precepts (*sunnah*) and hold fast to it. Do not follow your desires and opinions lest you deviate, for the most deviated person is he who follows his caprice and personal views without any guidance from God. Act virtuously toward yourselves, if you act virtuously you do so for your own good and if you act viciously you do so at your own peril.

'Treat the people courteously so that they may not get the pretext to ride rough shod over you, and couple it with obedience to your Lord. Beware of abusing God's enemies within their hearing lest they should abuse God out of hostility without any knowledge. You should know how they abuse God; whoever abuses God's friends has indeed abused God.'

After these instructions that are replete with higher values and ideals, the Imam (‘a) continues,

'O party whose affair has been protected by God! I bid you follow the footsteps and precepts of God's Apostle (s) and those of the Imams from the Household of God's Apostle (s), who are the guides after him;

1- *Surah al-Ana'am, 6:120.*

whoever follows them is rightly guided, and whoever abandons and loathes them goes astray, because it is to them that God enjoins obedience and loyalty. Our [fore] father the Apostle of God (s) has said: 'Incessant actions, even though they may be little, when done according to the precepts, are more pleasing to God and have a more beneficial outcome than exertions that are based on innovations and heresy.' Certainly, following one's desires and innovations without guidance from God is a form of deviation, all forms of deviation are innovations, and every innovation leads to hellfire. And nothing is attained of the good that is with God except by obedience to Him and perseverance.

'You should know that no one among the servants of God can attain faith until he is pleased with what God apportions to him and how He treats him, whether agreeable or disagreeable. You should be watchful of your prayers and [especially] the middle prayer, and stand in obedience to God, as He commanded you and the believers before you in His Book.

'You should love the poor among the Muslims because whoever despises and is arrogant towards them has indeed slipped off from God's religion and God will despise and detest him. Our [fore] father the Apostle of God (s) has said, 'My Lord has commanded me to love the poor among the Muslims'. Know that whoever holds a single one among the Muslims in contempt God will visit hate and contempt on him until the people detest him, while God detests him the most. Therefore, be wary of God with regard to your poor Muslim brothers, as they have a right that you should show them care since God has commanded His prophet to love them. He who does not love those God has enjoined to be loved, has indeed disobeyed God and His Apostle, and should he die in that condition, he will have died a deviant.

'Beware of arrogance and pride, for pride is the cloak of God the Exalted, and whoever challenges Him for it, He will smite and humiliate him on the Day of Resurrection.

'Beware of oppressing one another, as it is not part of the traits of the righteous to do that because whoever oppresses someone God will turn his aggression back on him and God's help will be with the oppressed, and whoever God helps will get the upper hand and become victorious.

'Beware of being jealous to one another as jealousy is the origin of unbelief.

'Beware of supporting another party against a wronged Muslim, that he should not invoke God against you and his invocation be answered. Our [fore] father the Apostle of God (s) used to say, 'The invocation of the wronged is answered.' Render help amongst yourselves because our [fore] father the Apostle of God (s) used to say: 'Helping a Muslim is better and carries greater reward than fasting for a month and doing the *i'tikaf* (a form of devotion in which one keeps to the mosque) in the Holy Mosque [at Mecca].'

'Beware of distressing anybody among your fellow believers by demanding of him something he may have owed you, while he experiences financial straits. Our [fore]father the Apostle of God (s) used to say, 'A Muslim is not allowed to distress another Muslim, and he who grants a Muslim respite (in paying a debt) God will put him in His shade on the Day of Resurrection, the day when there will be no shade except His own.'

'O party that has been shown mercy and made superior to others! Beware of procrastination in discharging God's rights from day to day, from hour to hour. Whoever hastens to discharge God's rights [should know that] He is more capable of expediting for him manifold rewards in this world and in the hereafter. And he who delays God's rights, [should know that] He is more capable of delaying his sustenance; and whoever God withholds his sustenance from cannot provide for himself. Therefore, give to God what is due to Him out of the sustenance He provides you, that He should make pleasant for you the rest of it and fulfill for you His promise to multiply [your rewards] a great many times that no one knows its number or the essence of the addition except God, Lord of the worlds.'

Another section of Imam Sadiq's (‘a) letter reads,

'O party! Know that God's norm has come to pass before with respect to the righteous. Whoever is eager to meet God as a really true believer should have loyalty to God, His Apostle (s) and the believers, renounce their enemies, and accept their merits which he knows, because the [full] knowledge of their great excellence cannot be attained by anyone

below their rank. Have you not heard the merit that God has mentioned of the followers of the Imams and guides, that is, the believers?

'They are with those whom God has blessed, including the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous, and excellent companions are they!'[1]

'This is only one aspect of the merits of the Imams' followers, so how about themselves and their own merits? Whoever will be happy to have his faith completed by God until he becomes a true believer, should endeavour to meet God with the conditions He stipulated for the believers. He has laid down these conditions: loyalty to the Imams of the believers, in addition to, loyalty to Him and His Apostle (s), establishing the prayer, paying the *zakat*, giving Him the goodly loan (i.e. giving out charity), and the avoidance of indecencies, the outward among them and the inward ones.

'Beware of persisting in anything that God has forbidden in the Qur'an outwardly or inwardly. God the Exalted has said:

﴿وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

"And who do not persist in what they have committed while they know."[2]

Know that God has bade and forbade, so that He may be obeyed, so whoever follows His commands has obeyed Him and attained all the good that is with Him, and whoever does not refrain from what He forbids has disobeyed Him and if he dies committing the sin God will throw him headlong into hellfire.

'Obey your Lord as much as you can because God is your Lord. Know that Islam means to submit, that is to submit to God's commands, and submission means Islam; whoever submits [to God] is a Muslim and he who does not have no Islam. Whoever wishes to do the greatest kindness to his soul should obey God.

'Beware of insubordination to God; for whoever disobeys God has done the worst offence to his soul, and there is no middle way between goodness and offence, thus, God has prepared paradise as the reward

1- *Sura Nisa', 4:69.*
2- *Surah Ale Emraan, 3:135.*

of good doers and hell that of the offenders. Conduct yourselves in obedience to God and eschew sin. Know that no one can avail you of anything before God, neither a near angel nor a messenger-prophet nor anyone else. Therefore, he who wishes to benefit from the intercession of those who will intercede with God should beseech His pleasure.'

Another section of this letter reads,

'Apply yourselves to constant mentioning of the unity of God (*tahlil*), His glorification and praise, and imploring Him and requesting the unlimited good that is with Him, which is neither quantifiable nor its essence fathomable. Occupy your tongues with that to the exclusion of utterances of falsehood, the destiny of whose speakers will be to abide in hellfire, should they die without repenting of them and asking for God's forgiveness.

'Supplicate (to God) because Muslims have no better means of attaining their needs from God than by supplicating, requesting, imploring Him, so desire that which God has urged you to desire and answer God's invitation to you so that you may earn felicity and be saved from God's punishment.

'Beware of coveting what God has forbidden you because whoever violates His prohibitions in this world God will deny him paradise and its everlasting blessings, pleasures and honour, which its people will enjoy for ever.

'Beware of disputing with the people who indulge in vanities. Follow the way of the righteous and emulate their composure, clemency, piety, truthfulness, fidelity, abstention from God's prohibitions and striving to act in obedience to Him. If you fail to do this, you cannot reach the position of your righteous predecessors in the eyes of your Lord.

'Know also, that if God the Exalted desires goodness for His servant He expands his breast to Islam. When He grants him that, his tongue will speak the truth, his heart will believe it and then he will act upon it. When God assembles all this for him He will have completed his Islam for him, and in God's eyes, he would be a true Muslim if he dies in that condition. And when God desires evil for His servant He leaves him to his own devices and his heart becomes narrow and straitened. When he mentions the truth his heart will not believe it, and when his heart does not believe it, God will not grant him the ability to act upon

it. When all this happens and he continues in that condition till he dies, he will be, in the eyes of God, a hypocrite, so that the truth his tongue had proclaimed which, however, God did not grant his heart the ability to believe in or his limbs to act upon, now becomes a proof against him.

'Therefore, fear God and ask Him to expand your breasts to Islam, make your tongues utter the truth till He causes you to die while you are still in that condition, and make your destiny be like that of the righteous before you. There is no power except with God. Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds.'

This is the end of Imam Sadiq's (‘a) will, most of whose sections we have quoted here. It is replete with invitation to the doing of good, fear of and obedience to God, the Exalted, eschewing sin and the things He has forbidden, and other lofty traits and comely qualities. Imam Sadiq (‘a) has intended that his *shi'ah* should be, in their morals and general conduct, a good source of emulation for all nations and peoples.

DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVITY

Shi'ah thought has attained the highest levels of development and creativity, not only in terms of political and educational programmes but in other matters that are no less important. We shall mention some of them presently.

Venerating Reason (Aql)

A- Imam Sadiq (‘a) says, 'The Prophet is God's proof against mankind while the proof in the transactions between God and mankind is the intellect.'[1]

B- Imam Abu Ja'far (‘a) says, 'When God created the intellect He said to it 'Come forward,' and it came forward. Then He said to it 'Withdraw,' and it withdrew. Then He said, 'By My Might and Sublimity, I have not created a creature more excellent than you, it is you I will command, it is you I will forbid, it is you I will reward and it is you I will punish.' '[2]

C- Imam Abu Abdillah (‘a) says, 'Indeed, the intellect, which God has made an adornment and light for His creatures, is the beginning of affairs and their source of strength and structure, without which no one can derive benefit (from anything). It is through the intellect that men know their Creator and that they are creatures, that He is the Manager and they the managed, and that He is eternal and they are mortal. With their intellects, they judge that His creation, such as the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon, the day and the night which they see, the intellect, and they themselves, must have a creator and manager, who never ceases to exist. And by the intellect they know the good from the bad, that darkness is found in ignorance and light in knowledge, and to all this the intellect directs them.'

1- Usul al-Kafi, 1: 25.
2- Usul al-Kafi, 1: 26.

Someone said to the Imam (‘a): 'Can mankind be contented with the intellect alone? to which he replied:

'God has made the intellect the foundation, ornament and source of guidance (for mankind). Its possessor comes to know that God is the Truth and that He is his Lord. He also understands that His creator has likes and dislikes, commands and prohibitions, but he finds that his intellect gives no guidance as to that, and he understands that it cannot be known except through knowledge and the seeking of it, and that he cannot use his intellect without first acquainting himself with those issues. It is therefore incumbent upon a sensible person to seek knowledge and culture, which is the foundation of everything.'[1]

In many similar hadiths the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) have indicated the worth of the intellect, and there is no doubt that the person devoid of it is exempted from the obligation of discharging duties and abstaining from prohibitions.

The Proof Value (Hujjiyah) of Reason

The Imamiyah Shi'ah believe that reason constitutes a proof and that it is one of the four proofs in Islamic jurisprudence, viz; the Qur'an, the Sunnah, consensus (*ijma'*) and reason, through which the *fuqaha* or jurists derive the rules of divine law. Reason is accorded a wide scope in this regard, part of which we will mention below, by way of illustration.

Rational Absence of Liability (al-bara' al-'aqliyah)

By this we mean the repugnance of punishment without prior explanation, a principle which is invoked in the absence of a clear text (*nass*) on a particular question, or where a text is of general nature or where there is a conflict of evidence. Among the applications of this principle are the cases of the vagueness of a rule of obligation (*al-shubhat al-hukmiyat al-wujubiyah*) and the vagueness of the subject of the application of a given rule (*al-shubhat al-maudu'iyyah*). The first situation pertains to where there is doubt between an obligation (*wujub*) and anything other than prohibition (*hurmah*), and the second refers to a situation whereby the rule (such as obligation or prohibition) is clear

1- Usul al-Kafi, 1: 29.

but there occurs uncertainty as to whether the particular case falls under obligation or permissibility (*ibabah*). This subject has been treated in detail in the works on principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) and the differences of opinion between the masters of this field with regard to the issue are mentioned.

In any case, rational absence of liability is one of the important issues studied in Islamic jurisprudence.

Presumption of Continuity (Istishab)

Istishab is to presume that a previous condition has not changed and one of the arguments presented for its proof value (*hujjiyah*) is that reason demands that we act on a previous situation so long as its contrary has not been established.

Equivalence of evidences and Preference (al-ta'dul wa al-tarajih)

This is where two evidences on the same plane of importance, whose implications (*dalalah*) conflict, so that there can be no basis of enactment (*milak*) except in one of them only, unlike in the case of al-*tazahum* (where two rules contend for the attention of the *mukallaf* - the legally competent person). Here there is *milak* in both evidences although the *mukallaf* is unable to discharge both obligations at the same time, such as saving two persons who are drowning at the same time.

In the issue of conflict of evidence, one of the means of preferring one to the other is for an evidence to conform with the dictates of reason, while the other contradicts it. In such a case, the former is preferred and a verdict is issued accordingly.

Upon the whole, many topics of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, such as the prelude to the obligatory (*muqaddimat al-wajib*) and the question as to whether to command a thing implies the prohibition of its contrary, come under the purview of reason.

Opening the Door of Independent Reasoning in Islamic Jurisprudence (Ijtihad)

Another issue which distinguishes the Imamiyah Shi'ah from other schools of Islamic jurisprudence is the opening of the door of *ijtihad*. This fact indicates the originality of their jurisprudence, its interaction

with real life, its progress and continuity in meeting all the needs of mankind. Shi'ah jurisprudence would not stand helpless in the face of new situations that affect the life of the people but for which no direct legal texts can be invoked, such as the issues of artificial insemination, organ transplant, traveling to outer space and banking operations, that have no solution except in the jurisprudence of the *Ahl al-Bayt ('a)*.

It is worthy of note that some outstanding scholars of al-Azhar have realized how necessary opening the door of *ijtihad* was, thus conforming to the Shi'ite view on this matter. Below are the opinions of some of them:

1. Sayyid Rashid Rida

Sayyid Rashid Rida, one of the outstanding Shaykhs of al-Azhar, says, 'We do not know of any benefit of leaving *ijtihad,* but we know that its harms are many, and they are invariably the consequence of neglecting reasoning, blocking the path of knowledge and the impediment to thinking. By abandoning the exercise of *ijtihad,* Muslims have neglected all forms of learning and are thus reduced to what we witness today.'[1]

2. Abd al-Muta'ali al-Sa'di

Abd al-Muta'ali al-Sa'di, a notable Egyptian and also an al-Azhar scholar, slammed at the closing of the door of *ijtihad,* saying, '…I can rightly declare after this, that the prohibition of *ijtihad* was effected unjustly, by means of coercion, and temptation with wealth. Undoubtedly, if other schools of jurisprudence apart from the four schools we follow today had had those means at their disposal people would have shunned the four schools. Therefore, we should be free to either continue with these four schools, which have been imposed on us by corrupt means, or revert to *ijtihad* to deduce our religious rules, because it had been prohibited by resorting to force, and Islam only approves of what comes about through common consent and consultation among Muslims.'[2]

1- Al-Wahdat al-Islamiyah, p.99.
2- Maydan al-Ijtihad, p.14.

3. Dr. Abd al-Da'im

Dr. Abd al-Da'im al-Baqri al-Ansari says, 'The prevention of ijtihad is the secret behind Muslims' backwardness. *Ijtihad* was the flexible door, the closing of which resulted in Muslims' backwardness as the world progressed. The work of the predecessors became impossible to change or supplant because, out of political considerations, the rulers had proscribed the exercise of *ijtihad* to save their thrones, so that no one would oppose them. If anyone raised opposition (for no nation is ever without an honest reformer who does not fear reproach in telling the truth), he was simply rejected because the door of *ijtihad* had been closed.

'This is why Islamic jurisprudence is stagnant today, although jurisprudence should reflect the collective spirit and life of the Muslim nation (*ummah*). I think that the devastating civil strife that beset the nation during the rule of Uthman, as a result of which the progress of Islamic conquests stopped and gave way to civil wars, was attributable to Uthman's conservatism. He had accepted it as a condition for his selection to the caliphate when he agreed with Abd al-Rahman bin 'Auf that it was 'mandatory to follow the precedents of the two Shaykhs (i.e. Abu Bakr and Umar) on all matters of consequence, without applying one's own judgment (*ijtihad*)', while Imam Ali (‘a) rejected it outright, saying, 'time has changed.' Thus, the means by which Uthman became caliph became the cause of his fall.'[1]

4. Allama al-Ubaydi

Allama al-Ubaydi says' '*Ijtihad* is a source of ease, and ease is among the paramount aims of the Law-giver and the most marvelous maxim of Islamic legislation. It is through the exercise of *ijtihad* that views are exchanged and the truth emerges. There is no end to the emergence of new situations and time brings something new, so if we rigidly stick to old views how can we respond to such issues? Closing the door of *ijtihad* is itself an exercise in *ijtihad*, therefore it should be said to its advocate, 'You say what you do not practice."[2]

1- Al-Falsafat al-Siyasiyah li al-Islam, p. 31.
2- Al-Nawat fi Haql al-Hayat, p. 124.

5. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani said beautifully: 'What legal text was invoked to close the door of *ijtihad*? Which founder (of the schools of jurisprudence) said: 'After me no Muslim should endeavour to acquire religious learning, or seek the guidance of the Qur'an and the authentic hadith, or make every effort to develop its concepts and deduce laws that will be amenable to modern sciences and cover the needs of the time, without contradicting the essence of the Qur'anic and hadith texts?' Indeed God has sent forth Muhammad (s) as a messenger with the language of his Arab people to teach them what He desired them to understand.

'I have no doubt that if Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad were to live to this day they would have continued their efforts in deducing rulings from the Qur'an and the hadith for every issue. And the more they delved into research the more would be their understanding and precision. No doubt those luminaries and masters of the community have done their utmost, may God reward them with the best. However, it is incorrect to believe that they had grasped all the secrets of the Qur'an and succeeded in recording them in their books.'[1]

6. Ahmad Amin

Ahmad Amin said, 'The Muslims have fallen prey to the incapacity which they ascribed to themselves, when they said that the door of *ijtihad* has been closed, because this means that there remains no one capable of fulfilling the conditions of the *mujtahid* (a jurist capable of practicing *ijtihad*), and there is no hope for it in the future. This statement was made by some laymen who were not sure of themselves and had poor opinion of the people [as a whole].[2]

Islam has deplored intellectual stagnation and called for progress and activity in all fields of thought and learning, and there is no wisdom or logic in closing the door of *ijtihad* and opening that of imitation (*taqlid*). There is nothing absurd or contradicting the Qur'an and the Sunnah in opening the door of *ijtihad*. Even the closing took place at a

1- Khatirat Jamal al-Din, p. 177.
2- Yaum al-Islam, p. 189.

particular time when the powers that they had some political interests in that, as some scholars inform us.[1]

Keeping the door of ijtihad open among the Shi'ah is a sign of their intellectual development and keeping abreast with the times. New developments that were unknown before and with regard to the rules governing which no legal texts were available in the field of Islamic legislation, are treated on the basis of practical maxims (*al-usul al-amaliyah*), to which a jurist takes recourse in the absence of a legal text or where it is of general nature or in conflict with another.

Universal Authority

We shall look briefly at the issue of universal authority (*al-marja'iyyah al-'ammah*) which is exercised by the greatest jurists according to the Shi'ah and it is the most sensitive position in the Islamic world.

The meaning of marja'iyyah

Marja'iyyah means deputizing for the Imam of the Age Mahdi (‘a), which authority the Imam (‘a), after the Great Occultation, has commissioned the jurists and *mujtahids* to take charge of the affairs of Muslims. He has assigned them the position of universal deputizing for him so that they may judge between the people with what God the Exalted has revealed. The Imam (‘a) has made it mandatory for the Muslims to accept their religious laws from the *marja'*s (religious authorities), and consult them in case of dispute, and under no circumstances should they oppose their fatwas, according to the narrations from the Imam (‘a).

Qualities of a marja'

It is necessary that a *marja'* has all the noble qualities of knowledge, courage, self abnegation and a full cognizance of the needs of the Muslim community. The jurists have outlined some of the basic conditions to be fulfilled by prospective *marja'*s and other *mujtahids* who will assume the function of issuing fatwas and adjudicating between Muslims. They are:

1- Hayat Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a), 1:220.

1. Being a male

He must be a male and this condition applies to the judge and the prayer leader as well; it is not permissible for a woman to hold these crucial positions not because she is underrated, but because of some inherent fragility in her which makes her incapable of bearing this responsibility and discharging it effectively. By virtue of a woman's psychological make up, she cannot hold such positions.

2. Rationality

It is a basic condition for *marja's* and non-*marja'*s. In fact, rationality is a condition for *taklif*, that is, for a person to be under obligation, without which one falls under the category of those with respect to whom 'the pen has been raised,' as is stated in the hadith which says that the actions of certain people are not recorded.

3. Faith of a marja'

He must be a faithful Muslim, failing which it will not be permissible to consider him a *marja'*, follow his rulings on religious law, or litigate before him, even if he had attained the highest level of *ijtihad.* Should he rule in litigations, his verdicts would have no legal force.

4. Uprightness (adalah)

A fundamental element of *marja'iyyah*, uprightness means that a *marja'* must possess the trait of character that can bar him from committing sin and crimes. He must be pious and conscious of his duty to God in all matters and actions. He should never bow to sentiment and desires, nor be partial toward his relations or toward one nation at the expense of another. Like the pure Imams (‘a), a *marja'*s behaviour and conduct should represent the ideal.

5. Ijtihad

The *marja'* must attain the highest level of the ability to practice *ijtihad*, which is defined as the process of deducing a ruling of Islamic law from the established sources. Based on these sources, the Muslim jurist issues his ruling on legal questions that pertain to acts of worship, transactions, and new issues that prop up. The question of *ijtihad*, including its types (absolute or partial *ijtihad*), has been treated in detail in both traditional and modern works on Islamic jurisprudence.

These are the basic conditions for a *marja'*, failing even one of which will disqualify a jurist from occupying the weighty position of *marja'*.

Selecting a Marja'

Selecting the *marja'* as the universal guide of the nation is entrusted to the experienced and religiously sensitive jurists. They chose him after complete knowledge of his piety and intellectual acumen, which is attested by his writings and research work.

Responsibilities of a marja'

The responsibilities of a *marja'* are heavy and difficult. They include:

A- Vigilance over the interests of the Islamic world without discriminating between different denominations and nationalities, because, as father to all, the *marja'* sees to the success of its affairs, protects its interests and wards off its enemy.

One of the noble stands that were taken by the *marja'iyyah* in Najaf, was its support of the Muslim people of Libya against Italian aggression, when it called on all Muslims to assist them and fight the invaders.[1] When British troops occupied Iraq (early last century), they met with stiff resistance from the religious authorities in Najaf, led by Imam al-Shirazi, who issued a fatwa making it a duty to chase out the British. This gave birth to the celebrated *Thawrat al-'ishrin* (The Revolt of 1920) which shook the United Kingdom. When the Zionists occupied Palestine with the support of western colonialist powers which are perpetually hatching plots against Muslims, the religious authorities of the Shi'ah rose in support of the oppressed people of Palestine, issuing fatwas urging the Muslims to wage jihad and assist the Palestinian armed struggle against the criminal Zionists. Similarly, when the valiant Algerian people declared independence from French colonial rule to preserve their freedom and honour, the Shi'ah authorities stood by them and declared, in fatwas, that it was obligatory to support them.

When Iraq came under socialist onslaught during the rule of Abd al-Karim Qasim, all the *marja'*s and other Islamic scholars of the country resisted it to deliver Iraq from the menace of socialism. Imam Hakim

1- Lamahat ijtima'iyyah min Trikh al-Iraq al-Hadith.

issued the fatwa: 'Socialism is unbelief and atheism,' which came like a thunderbolt on the socialists of Iraq, shaking their very foundations and stripping them of popular support. In addition, it shook global socialism and spoiled all its machinations in the Muslim world and beyond.

In any case, the religious authority of Imamiyah Shi'ah is a source of grace and a means of serving the Muslims entirely; rather than being partial to a particular denomination, it champions the common good of all Muslims wherever they live.

B- Another function of the *marja'* is the running of the religious schools and training the young generation of scholars, who are taught Islamic jurisprudence and allied branches of knowledge to prepare them for the task of guiding the people and spreading the rules of Islamic law throughout the Muslim world and beyond. In addition, the *marja'* attends to the economic needs of theological students whom the religious authority treats as his sons.

Similarly, the *marja'* extends his support and kindness to the poor and the destitute, and helps poor bachelors to get married.

Separating Marja'iyyah from the Government

An important aspect of the *marja'iyyah* of Imamiyah Shi'ism is its complete independence of government. Because the government exercises no control over it, the *marja'iyyah* enjoys complete freedom in what it says and does, including the fatwas it issues. When the religious authorities in Najaf declared that socialism was infidelity, the government of Iraq at that time was backing the Iraqi socialists.

With regard to its independence, the institution of *marja'iyyah* takes inspiration from the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (pbo.th). Mansur al-Dawaniqi, the Abbasid caliph, had written to Imam Sadiq (‘a), saying, 'Why don't you visit us?' The Imam (‘a) replied, 'We have no worldly possessions to occasion us to fear you for their sake, and you have nothing of the hereafter that we may hope to get from you, so for what purpose should we visit you?' Mansur wrote, 'You will give us company and advise us.' The Imam (‘a) answered Mansur, 'He who desires the hereafter will not keep you company and he who desires the world will not advise you.'

Thus, the institution of *marja'iyyah* does not depend on the government economically, politically or otherwise. It is separate from the government, and that is why governments generally detest it as they detest religious scholars.

Marja'iyyah's source of income

The sources of income of this institution are very significant and sufficient to run a government. The major ones are:

1- *Khums: Khums* is a religious tax paid by the Imamiyah Shi'ah to the marja'. Among the types of wealth on which *khums* is levied is the surplus over and above one's yearly expenditure, whether it is money or other items. It is also obligatory to pay *khums* for presents, donations, prizes, wealth that has been bequeathed (apart from the portions stipulated for specific inheritors by Islamic law), increments on specific or general endowments, and unexpected legacy.

Khums is divided into two, one is for the Imam (‘a) and the other for the Sayyeds (may God increase their honour). The Imam's (‘a) share is given to the *marja'* to spend it on the common good of the Muslims, most important of which are observance of religious rites, spreading its doctrines and laws, stipends of theological students who spend their time learning the religious sciences and defending Islam. It should be noted that these proceeds are disbursed to the *marja'* during the period of Occultation of the Imam (‘a). When the Imam (‘a) was around it was paid to him. Books of Islamic jurisprudence and the *marja'*s' practical laws of Islam discuss the issue of *khums* in detail.

2- *Zakat*: This is a religious tax that is obligatory with respect to four agricultural items, wheat, barley, dates and raisins; money, i.e. gold and silver; and livestock, i.e. camels, cattle, sheep and goats. It is mandatory to spend what is collected as zakat on the poor of the place where it is collected but if the jurist requires it then it should be taken to him.

3- *Votive offerings* (*nudhur*): Votive offerings make up part of the *marja'iyyah'*s income. Significant amounts are collected in this way and some of it reaches the *marja*'. A detailed discussion on votive offerings is found in works on Islamic jurisprudence, including the types that are valid and those that are not.

4- *Bequeathed third*: Some believers bequeath a third of their estate to be transferred to the *marja'* to be spent for charitable purposes, or for paying for the making up of prayers or fasts that they may have missed during their life time.

In addition to these sources, the *marja'* receives donations and other charities.

THE DOCTRINES OF THE SHI'AH

The Shi'ah believe in all the higher principles and noble values which Islam has brought without introducing any innovations or contradicting a single *sunnah* (precept laid down by the Prophet (s)). They have conformed to the way of Islam, upheld its fundamentals and secondary principles, upholding most of the doctrines of other denominations of Islam. Below is a brief presentation of their belief system.

1. Belief in God

Belief in God the Exalted forms the greatest pillar of Muslim doctrine, being the bedrock of the Islamic religion and for whose sake the Apostle of God (s) fought fierce battles. The presumptuous chiefs of the Quraysh, with Abu Sufyan as leader, had resolved to extinguish the light of God and muffle the voice of *tauhid* (Oneness of God), but the Almighty granted His great Prophet (s) victory. Thus, the Quraysh band of hypocrites was routed, and the banner of *tauhid* fluttered aloft as Islam became robust and firmly established.

2. Faith through Reason

Like other Muslims the Shi'ah believe that belief in God and His Oneness should be based on proofs rather than imitation. Rational and sensory arguments for the existence of God abound and a moment's reflection on the order of the world with its astonishing precision imprints on the mind a profound belief in the existence of the great Creator.

La Bellas says, 'The mind boggling order that is witnessed in the movement of the heavenly bodies of which the solar system is part, cannot be the work of chance, rather chance is a word that has no place in the language of science. Chance is non-existent and impossible in this form of knowledge, which considers everything to be under the laws of equilibrium and mathematics, which have been fixed by an unseen will and a profound wisdom. What we call chance is nothing

but the work of an unseen force whose influence we know nothing of, rather we know nothing about its existence, although it is everywhere around us.

'Therefore, it is impossible to explain this order which we see in the solar system by simply saying it is the work of chance. We have to acknowledge the existence of a universal first cause which designed this system.'[1]

Another western scholar Chris Morrison says, 'The existence of the creator is indicated by the endless systems without which life would have been impossible. The existence of man on earth with his prodigious intelligence is but a part of the grand design that is being executed by the creator of the universe.'[2]

Modern science has proved that this universe has been created with wisdom and planning, and every day and every hour thousands of conclusive arguments for the existence of the great creator become known. Indeed the views of atheists have failed and many of them have retraced their steps. Dr. A. J. Craning, a former atheist who has declared his faith in God, said, 'When we reflect on the universe and its secrets, wonders, order, precision, splendour and beauty, we cannot help thinking about a God and Creator. Who can gaze at the sky in a clear summer night and see the infinite number of stars twinkling far away, without believing that this universe cannot be the work of blind chance? This planet of ours which swims in space in precise ordered movements with its seasons that follow one another in sequence cannot be a mere ball of matter that has been broken off from the sun and thrust into space without any meaning or purpose.

'Explore the universe, bring to mind all that the holy books have said and observe the way life is moving, you will surely see a great puzzle in it all, an unfathomable secret. This cannot have come out of nothing, for nothing originates from nothing.'[3]

Surely, the least reflection on the universe, the creation of a human being, the systems of his body and the secrets they contain will make

1- Al-Nizam al-Tarbawi fi al-Islam, p. 229.
2- Allah wa al-Ilm al-Hadith.
3- Allah wa al-Ilm al-Hadith.

one have faith in God Almighty, the Creator of the universe and Giver of life.

3. Attributes of God

The Shi'ah believe that the attributes of God are identical with His essence, their existence being the same as its existence. The divine attributes are of two categories:

A- Attributes of beauty and perfection, such as knowledge, power, mercy, needlessness, will and creation.

B- Attributes of sublimity, which are known as the negative attributes, such as 'He does not oppress His servants', 'He is not a body', 'He is not a contingent being', etc.

To eliminate anthropomorphism from the Godhead, the lord of monotheists and leader of the pious, Imam Ali (‘a) says:

'The foremost issue in religion is to know Him. The perfection of knowing Him is to believe in Him. The perfection of believing in Him is to acknowledge His Oneness. The perfection of acknowledging His Oneness is to regard Him free (of all associates). And the perfection of regarding Him free (of all associates) is not to ascribe attributes to Him because every attribute testifies that it is not the characterized thing, and every characterized thing testifies that it is not the attribute. Thus, whoever ascribes attributes to Allah acknowledges a parallel for Him, and he who acknowledges a parallel for Him has considered Him two. He who considers Him two has ascribed parts to Him. He who ascribes parts to Him is ignorant of Him, he who is ignorant of Him points at Him, he who points at Him has limited Him, and he who limits Him has numbered Him.

'Whoever asks, 'In what is He,' has held that He is encompassed; and whoever asks, 'On what is He,' posits that certain places are empty of His Being. He is a Being but not through occurrence. He exists not from non-existence. He is together with everything but not in terms of physical nearness. He is other-than everything but not in terms of physical separation. He acts but not in the sense of movements and instruments. He sees when there was yet nothing from among His creation to be looked at. He is only One such that there is none with whom He may keep company or whom He may miss in his absence.

'He initiated the creation and originated it, with no need for musing or drawing from experience, and without making any movement, or suffering any anxiety. He has assigned all things to their times, harmonized their differences, created their dispositions and forced them (the dispositions) to keep to the things (they have been created for), knowing them before creating them and encompassing their limits and terminations…'[1]

Many similar golden speeches that expound the attributes of God and His Oneness have come down from the intellectual giant of Islam, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) and his offspring, the immaculate Imams (‘a). There is no tinge of anthropomorphism in them, unlike what some Islamic denominations claim. The Shi'ah reject ascribing any attribute of creatures, such as corporeality, position and situation, to the great Creator.

4. Impossibilty of comprehending His Essence

The Shi'ah believe that it is impossible to know the essence of God, the Exalted, and comprehend His Reality because it is beyond the ken of the intellect which is limited despite its capabilities, so how can a limited thing grasp that Great Light which encompasses both the seen and the unseen? A poet says:

'By God, neither Moses, nor Jesus Christ nor Muhammad;

Nor Gabriel who ascends to the Holy Precincts;

Never, neither the non-composite soul, nor the immaterial intellect;

Know the true nature of Your Essence except that You are the One in Essence and Eternal.

They found attributes and negations, but the Reality they could not discern.

They saw a Necessary Existent Who annihilates time and (Himself) is never exhausted.

Let the philosophers escape the orb before which the celestial spheres prostrate.

1- Imam Ali's (‘a) Nahj al-Balaghah sermon no. 1.

Who are you, O Aristotle! Who was Plato before you, O dim-witted one?

Who was Avicenna, when he recorded what you constructed for him?

Are you any better than a moth which, seeing a burning flame,

Drew near it and burnt itself? Had it attained guidance it would have removed afar.'

Ibn Abi al-Hadid writes:

'Thinking has grown dull when directed at You O Marvel of the universe!

Whenever my thought about You approaches a span it retreats a mile.

You have astonished the intelligent and thrown minds into confusion.'

The planet that we live on, with its plains, mountains, waters, fields and forests, is nothing but a tiny party of God's creation. Despite being the best creatures living on earth, human beings have limited power of thinking, so how can they discern that great Reality, the Originator of creation?

5. Divine Justice

The Shi'ah hold a firm belief that the Almighty is just in His decree and He never partial in His judgment. He rewards the good doers and punishes the wicked. He does not impose on his servants what is above their capacity. He does not command except what is good and does not prohibit except the bad. Justice, as an attribute of God, is among the divine attributes of perfection and affirmation.

There are valuable discussions on this topic in the books of Islamic theology.

6. The Hereafter and Resurrection

Like other Muslims the Shi'ah believe that God, the Exalted, will raise His creatures from the graves after their death and gather them on the Day of Resurrection to reward the obedient and punish the sinners.

The belief in bodily resurrection is considered a necessary doctrine of Islam and is indicated by several verses of the noble Qur'an. God Almighty says:

﴿أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَلَّنْ نَجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُ ۞ بَلَى قَادِرِينَ عَلَى أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ﴾

"Does man suppose that We shall not put together his bones? Yes indeed, We are able to proportion [even] his fingertips!"[1]

﴿وَإِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ أَئِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا أَئِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ﴾

"If you are to wonder [at anything] wonderful is their remark, 'When we have become dust shall we be [ushered] into a new creation?"[2]

﴿قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ ۞ قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنْشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ﴾

"He (man) says, 'Who shall revive the bones when they have decayed?' Say, 'He will revive them who produced them the first time."[3]

These and other verses of the Qur'an declare that mankind will be resurrected from their graves and called to account for their deeds in this world, and be recompensed according to whether their actions were good or evil.

7. Prophethood

The Shi'ah believe that the phenomenon of prophethood is a form of divine grace that God has bestowed on His servants to purify them by preparing wholesome ways for their edification, cautioning them against the commission of vices and seeking to implant noble traits in their souls and to liberate them from immoral behaviour.

God Almighty is the one who selects for this lofty position, those, from among His servants, with ample faith and piety, unimpaired personality and infallibility from deviation. To establish the proof through them, the Exalted God supports them with miracles, which are sent according

1- *Surah al-Qiamah, 75:3-4.*
2- *Surah al-Ra'd, 13:5.*
3- *Surah Yasin, 36:78-79.*

to the forms of learning that were prominent at the time of every prophet.

During the time of Moses (‘a) the prevalent art was sorcery, so God worked a miracle for him by way of his staff which became a great viper and swallowed the ropes and sticks which the sorcerers had made to appear like snakes. This frightened the sorcerers and Pharaoh's men and the former became convinced by the miracle because it was superior to their magical devices.

At the time of Jesus (‘a) the art of medicine held sway so God gave him a miracle which medical knowledge could not compete with; he healed the blind and the leper and revived the dead. This caused the people to accept him as Prophet and follow his message, as they have been convinced what they saw.

Similarly, God Almighty gave His greatest Apostle, Muhammad (s) the Qur'an which is his eternal miracle. This book had surpassed all the styles of Arabic in beauty and eloquence, that the people boasted of during that period. The Prophet (s) challenged the eloquent men of his time to compose even a single chapter like the chapters of the Qur'an but they could not help admitting their incapacity. In addition to its eloquence, the Qur'an consists of a complete and comprehensive life programme.

8. Prophet Muhammad (s)

The Shi'ah believe that the noble Apostle Muhammad (s) is the seal of the Prophets who God sent with guidance and the true religion to make it prevail over all religions even if the polytheist were averse. He (s) has raised the call of monotheism, enlightened the world with his knowledge and wisdom, and removed mankind from obedience to Satan to obedience to God.

The Commander of the Faithful, Ali (‘a) the flag bearer of Islam says, 'Then He (i.e. God) sent Muhammad (s) with the truth, to free mankind from the worship of idols and invite them to the worship of God, from obedience to Satan to obedience to Him. This he did through the Qur'an, which he clearly explained and made firm, so that he may teach the people about their Lord, of whom they were ignorant, and that they

may accept Him after having denied Him, and acknowledge Him after having believed Him.'[1]

Imam Ali bin al Husayn, the master of the worshippers, (‘a) says:

'O God, bless Muhammad Your trustee with Your revelation, Your select among Your creation, Your elect among Your servants, leader in [spreading] Your mercy, the guide toward Your goodness and the key of blessing. [Bless him] as he struggled hard for obeying Your command, exposed himself to inconveniences for Your sake, showed open hostility to his kinsmen in inviting people to Your religion, fought his family for Your pleasure, and broke with his relatives to revitalize Your religion. He distanced away the closest people to him because of their denying You, drew near him the remotest because they answered You, and befriended the far-away people and showed enmity to the near relations, all for Your sake.

'He tired himself in propagating Your message and inviting people to Your creed, and occupied himself in counseling those who answered Your call. He migrated to the land of exile, far from his earth and home, where he was born and with which his soul was intimate, his aim being to reinforce Your religion and seek victory over the unbelieving lot, until what he attempted against Your enemies became established…'[2]

The doctrine of the Shi'ah with regard to the great Apostle (s) is that he was a messenger from God whom He had distinguished to convey His religion, singled out to bear His revelation and chose to guide His servants. The Apostle (s) endured much persecution and calamities at hands of the Quraysh, who disbelieved in God and continued worshipping their idols. After God had granted victory to His messenger (s) and honoured His religion, the Quraysh joined Islam grudgingly, with their minds still harbouring infidelity and denial of the prophetic message.

9. Imamate

According to Shi'ite doctrine, Imamate or leadership is one of the fundamentals of Islam, just like Prophethood. In fact, it is the extension of the grace that Prophethood represented and a continuation of its

1- Nahj al-Balaghah.
2- Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyah.

program for mankind. Imamate is one of the necessary parts (*daruriyat*) of religion because of its immense functions which cannot be dispensed with. These include guiding the people, refining their behaviour and offsetting any distortions that may affect the religious order and conduct of worldly affairs. Below we shall briefly touch some issues concerning the imamate:

A- The Shi'ah believe that the Imam (‘a) is designated by divine decree (*nass*); God the Exalted is the one who chooses for this office whomsoever He wishes from among His righteous servants and that it is not the people's prerogative to select one. In fact, in most cases a people's choice is not in tandem with the general good because it arises from personal interests that often clash with the common weal. Most of the painful crises and tragedies that befell the Muslim world are a direct result of removing the prerequisite of *nass* from the caliphate. We have already discussed this issue in detail in earlier chapters.

B- The infallibility of the Imams (‘a): Some Islamic denominations reproach the Shi'ah for adhering to the doctrine of their Imams' infallibility because they compare the pure Imams (‘a), from whom God has repelled all impurity and purified a thorough purification, with other human beings who often succumb to their base desires and inclinations, and commit sin whether inadvertently or by design. This comparison is completely incorrect and very far from the truth, for a browsing through their biographies is enough to show how their conduct was as bright as daylight, never having been soiled by any sin throughout their lives.

By God's grace, I have been able to write on the life histories of the Imams (‘a) and for nearly forty years, I have not come across anything about their lives except marks of glory and nobleness. The general feature of their lives was fear and obedience to God Almighty and religious consciousness. Historical works did not record any deviation or sin against them; on the contrary, we find that they were completely preoccupied with devotion to God while persevering at the same time, to overcome the tribulations that the tyrants of their times had caused them to suffer. Naturally, this is what is called infallibility.

C- The Shi'ah believe that God has bestowed on the Imams of Guidance (‘a), knowledge, wisdom and distinctive speech, thereby distinguishing them from the rest of creation. The leader of the Imams,

the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (‘a) was the gate of the knowledge of God's Apostle (s) who lit the world with his knowledge and genius. The Egyptian scholar, Mahmud al-Aqqad says, he was the originator of more than thirty branches of knowledge. Imam Ali (‘a) is reported to have said, 'Ask me before you are deprived of me' and 'had I got the chance I would have given my legal opinion with the Torah for the Jews, the Gospels for the Christians, the Qur'an for the Muslims.' And by Muslim consensus he was the most learned of the community of Muhammad (s) and had the profoundest insight into Islamic laws and religious matters generally.

A review of the history of the other Imams (‘a) will show that they surpassed all the scholars of their times who pursued different fields of learning. For instance, in the great university he founded in Medina which brought together 4000 students, Imam Sadiq (‘a) used to lecture on all branches of learning, including philosophy and medicine. Jabir bin Hayyan, the pride of eastern Arab lands, who founded chemistry, was one of his students. In his treatises that number more than 500, Jabir declares that he received all what he knew from his master Imam Ja'far Sadiq (‘a).

Similarly, the other immaculate Imams (‘a.) were all outstanding scholars of international repute. Once the Abbasid caliph Mamun intended to refute the Shi'ite belief that their Imams' (‘a) knowledge was incomparable to anyone else's and that they were the most erudite people in the whole world, so he invited scholars from different parts of the world to hold a debate with Imam Rida (‘a). First Mamun held a secret meeting with the invitees and promised them immense wealth if they could defeat the Imam (‘a). The scholars prepared the most difficult and complex questions on all branches of learning: jurisprudence, medicine, physics, chemistry, philosophy, astronomy, etc. In this encounter Imam Rida was asked more than 20,000 questions, all of which he answered as would a specialist, as a result of which the majority of the scholars recognized him as Imam (‘a), acknowledged that he was among God's proofs on His servants and that there was no one in the world as knowledgeable as him.

Subsequently, the Imam's (‘a) excellence became the subject of talk in different circles, a development that forced Mamun to hide him from the public for fear of sedition on account of the people's inclination

toward him. This was one of the reasons why Mamum assassinated him.

Mamun followed the same policy with Imam Jawad (‘a) who was not more than nine years old, at which age one cannot answer as correctly as an expert should if asked questions from all branches of learning. Scholars asked Imam Jawad (‘a) more than 20,000 questions at various times and he responded to them without hesitation, a fact which has been reported by all the sources that mentioned his biography.[1] Mamun's ill-fated efforts augmented the Shi'ites' belief that their Imams surpassed all scholars in knowledge and ingenuity.

The obligation of adhering to the Imams (‘a.)

The Shi'ah hold that it is necessary to love and obey the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*, in adherence to Qur'anic injunctions, such as God's saying:

﴿قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَى﴾

"Say 'I do not ask of you any reward for it except affection for [my] relatives."[2]

And in the continuously transmitted (*mutawatir*) Sunnah there are Prophetic commands such as his saying, 'O people! I will precede you and you will meet me by the Pond when I will ask you how you treated the two weighty things, so watch the way you treat them after me.' The people then said, 'What are the two weighty things, O Apostle of God?' 'The greater weighty thing is the book of God, a link, one end of which is in God's hand and the other in your hands, so hold fast to it and do not change, so that you may not go astray. And [the lesser one is] my Household.'[3]

By this noble hadith the Prophet (s) has guaranteed that whoever adheres to the two weighty things will not go astray. He has made the two together into a single source of guidance and felicity for the

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1- We have treated this in detail in our book Hayat al-Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (‘a).

2- *Surah al-Shura, 42:23.*

3- Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, 2:109, and with some variations, in Sahih Muslim, 2:362 and Musnad Ahmad, 3:17.

Muslim nation for all time. In earlier chapters we have treated this and similar hadiths and adduced proofs for the necessity of having affection for the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a.), and we have indicated that the most prominent mark of that affection was for one to receive the rules of the sacrosanct divine law from them.

The Number of the Imams (‘a)

Majority of the hadith works have recorded, in sequence, the names of the successors the Apostle of God (s) appointed as testamentary legatees (*awsiya'*), and entrusted with the function of propagating his message and teaching his noble manners and ideals. To that effect, continuously transmitted (*mutawatir*) hadiths have been reported, one of which is by Jabir bin Sumrah who says, 'I heard the Apostle of God (s) saying: 'The religion will continue to exist till the coming of the Hour and there will be, as their [i.e. the Muslims] leaders, twelve successors [of mine] all of whom will be from the Quraysh.'[1]

Some reports have mentioned the names of the Imams one after the other, beginning with the Commander of the Faithful Ali (‘a) and ending with the Mahdi (‘a). Here are their names and brief biographies:

1. The Commander of the Faithful (‘a)

He was the brother of the Prophet (s), the father of his two grandsons, the gate of his city of knowledge, his testamentary legatee (*wasiy*) and immediate successor, who was to the Prophet (s) what Aaron was to Moses, and the maintainer of social justice in the Islamic world. He was born in the holy Kaabah ten years before the beginning of the Prophetic mission. He was the only person to have been born in it. He was martyred in the mosque of Kufa on the 21st day of the month of Ramadan, in 40 A.H. when a Kharijite rebel by the name of Abdurrahman bin Muljam (may God curse him) assassinated him.

2. Imam Hasan (‘a)

He was the first beloved grandson of the Apostle of God (s) who, together with his brother, Imam Husayn, are the lords of the youth of paradise (‘a). Imam Hasan (‘a) was born in Medina in 3 A.H. in the

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1- Sahih Bukhari, 4:164; Sahih Muslim, 2:119, in which the hadith is explicit on what the Shi'ah hold on the matter.

month of Ramadan, the most blessed of all months. After his birth, the Prophet (s) recited the *adhan* in his right ear and the *iqamah* in his left and named him Hasan. On the seventh day, he slaughtered a ram for the *aqiqah* rite, had Hasan's head shaved and gave out the weight of the hair in silver to the poor as alms. He also had him circumcised on the same day.

The Prophet (s) took care of the education of Imam Hasan, imparting to him his gracious morals and wisdom until he became a brilliant replica of the Prophet (s).

Imam Hasan (‘a) (‘a) took over the office of Imamate after the martyrdom of his father and had to contend with the cunning Mu'awiya bin Abi Sufyan of the Age of Ignorance, a sworn enemy of the Prophetic Household. Mu’awiya sent his spies to infiltrate the ranks of the Iraqi army and they quickly succeeded in corrupting and bribing the leaders. They promised to capture or assassinate Imam Hasan. Considering the interest of Islam as paramount, the Imam concluded a peace treaty with Mu'awiya, although it was very detestable for him. Were it not for his acceptance of the treaty, the Muslim nation would have been engulfed by catastrophes of enormous proportions. I have mentioned in my book al-*Imam al-Hasan* (‘a) the causes that necessitated the acceptance of the treaty and why it could not have been avoided.

Imam Hasan (‘a) was assassinated by the rebellious criminal Mu'awiya bin Abi Sufyan by getting the Imam's (‘a) wife Ju'dah bint al-Ash'ath poison him. Imam Hasan (‘a) died on the 7th of Safar, 49 A.H.

3. Imam Husayn (‘a)

He was the father of freemen, master of the martyrs, the pride of Islam, the second grandson of God's Apostle (s). The Prophet (s) gave him these highly respectable appellations: 'Lord of the youth of paradise'[1], 'Imam, son of an Imam, brother of an Imam, and father of nine Imams'[2], 'He and his brother are Imams, whether they stand up or they sit down,'[3] and the well-known order of merit, 'Husayn is of me and I am of

1- Tarikh bin Asakir, 13:50; Siyar A'lam al-Nubala', 3:190.
2- Minhaj al-Sunnah, 4:210.
3- Bihar al-Anwar, 10:78.

Husayn, may God love whoever loves Husayn.' Husayn is one among grandsons.[1]

He was born in 4[2] or 3 A.H.[3] As soon as the Prophet (s) got the news of Husayn's birth, he immediately went to al-Zahrah's house and kissed the baby several times and his eyes welled up with tears. Perplexed at the sight, Asma' said, 'May my mother and father be your ransom! What makes you weep?' The Apostle of God (s) answered her mournfully, 'This son of mine.' She became very astonished and said, 'But he is just born.' Then the Apostle (s) informed her of what would befall his newborn child, saying, 'The rebellious party shall kill him. May God never grant them my intercession!' but added that she should not tell Fatima, the mistress of all women, as she had only just given birth to him.[4]

Then the Prophet (s) performed the rites of birth for him, viz, he recited the *adhan* in his right ear and the *iqamah* in his left, named him Husayn. On the seventh day he slaughtered a ram for the *aqiqah*, had his head shaved and gave in charity to the poor the hair's weight in silver.

The Prophet (s) took charge of Husayn's education, and like Hasan, he was the apple of his eye.

After the demise of Imam Hasan (‘a), the Islamic caliphate had turned into a plaything in the hands of the Umayyads. The evil plots of Quraysh reactionaries, who employed every means to take away the caliphate from the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)*, having borne fruit. Then the profligate Yazid bin Muawiya, inheritor of the policy of his father and grandfather, Mu’awiya and Abu Sufyan, became caliph-king over the Muslims. Those two had waged war against Islam before and tried hard to obliterate the word of God entirely.

When Yazid openly committed sin, crime and infidelity, Imam Husayn (‘a) could not keep silent, so he launched his glorious uprising, which served as admonition to those who could reason and a cause of

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1- Sunan bin Majah, 1:51; Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal, 4:172; Usd al-Ghabah, 2:19; Tahdhib al-Kamal, p.7; al-Hakim's Mustadrak, 3:177.
2- Tahdhib al-Asma', 1: 163; Khitat al-Maqrizi, 2: 285.
3- Usul al-Kafi, 1:463; al-Isti'ab printed on the margins of al-Isabah, 1:377.
4- Musnad Imam Zayd, p. 468.

making clear the lessons in God's Book. He and a select group of his family and noble companions were martyred on the tenth of Muharram in 61 A.H. His body was mutilated. His head and those of his martyred companions were raised on spears and shown around as an act of humiliation, which however, served to light the path of freedom and honour for Muslims. Imam Husayn's (‘a) tragedy was a great calamity which afflicted Muslims throughout their history.

4. Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a)

He was the leader of the pious. Apart from his forefathers, no one could match his piety, asceticism and total devotion to God. He was the author of al-*Sahifat al-Sajjadiyah,* known as the Psalms of the Household of Muhammad. This book which contains some of the most marvelous supplications of the Imam (‘a) is replete with educative, moral and political lessons, among others. Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) also wrote *Risalat al-Huquq,* in which he outlined individual and social rights for the Muslim society. In addition, he was among those who laid the foundations of the *Ahl al-Bayt* school, as his classes were attended by the outstanding scholars of his time.

Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) was born in Medina on the 5th of Sha'ban of the year 38 A.H.[1] He was educated by his father Imam Husayn and grandfather Imam Ali (‘a) who taught him their excellent morals and good deeds.

He died on the 25th of Muharram, 95 A.H. He was assassinated by the criminal Walid bin Abd al-Malik who ordered his governor in Medina to poison the Imam.

5. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a)

He was bestowed with great talents and limitless wonders. He was known as the splitter of the knowledge of the First and the Last. The Prophet (s) designated him Imam, gave him the name Muhammad, and surname al-Baqir (i.e. the splitter or dissector of knowledge), and sent him his greetings through his eminent companion Jabir bin Abdillah al-Ansari, the last of the Prophet's (s) companions.[2]

1- Tuhfat al-Raghib, p.13; bin Sabbagh's al-Fusul al-Muhimmah, p. 212.
2- Hayat al-Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) second edition, 1:23.

He was born in Medina on 3rd Safar, 56 A.H. and educated by his grandfather Imam Husayn and father Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a). They had implanted in him their lofty ideals and noble values and he became their true replica. He was assassinated by the Umayyads. It has been said that Hisham bin Abd al-Malik was the one who killed him while other sources say it was Ibrahim bin al-Walid. He died in 114 A.H. or some other date.[1]

6. Imam Sadiq (‘a)

He was the intellectual giant of the Muslim nation and the establisher of the intellectual movement in the Islamic world who, according to Jahidh, filled the world with his learning. Being a most talented and ingenious personality, many scholars have drunk from his spring of knowledge, which comprised all fields: medicine, chemistry, physics, jurisprudence, philosophy, theology, etc. His university attracted 4000 students, among who were Abu Hanifa and Malik.

This great Imam (‘a) was born on Friday, 17th Rabi' al-Awwal, 83 A.H. He was trained by the greatest educator in Islam, his grandfather Imam Zayn al-Abidin and his father Imam Baqir (‘a). Imam Sadiq (‘a) spent part of his life during the closing years of the Umayyad dynasty when it was being shaken by internal revolt. It subsequently succumbed to the onslaught of Abbasid forces which were led by Abu Muslim al-Khurasani, thus, the Abbasid dynasty was founded. The preoccupation of rival political groups with power struggle, presented an opportunity for the Imam to impart his knowledge. Thus, he became the founder of the *Ahl al-Bayt* school of jurisprudence thereby making the Shi'ah self-sufficient in terms of jurisprudence without having to rely on the other Islamic schools.

Imam Sadiq (‘a) died in 138 A.H. at the age of 65, according to some sources. Mansur al-Dawaniqi, the ruthless Abbasid caliph, was responsible for his death, as he ordered his governor in Medina to poison the Imam.

I have treated comprehensively the life and times of Imam Sadiq (‘a) in my book *Mawsu'at al-Imam al-Sadiq (‘a)*.

1- Hayat Imam Zayn al-Abidin (‘a).

7. Imam Musa bin Ja'far al-Kazim (‘a)

He was similar to Jesus Christ (‘a) in terms of piety, asceticism and penitence; and Job (‘a) in the trials and tribulations he endured. He was the highest means of approaching God the Exalted for the granting of needs, for never has a distressed person entreated to God in his name but God relieved him of his distress. Imam Musa (‘a) is known as the Door of Granting Requests.

He was born in al-Abwa during the rule of the tyrant Abd al Malik bin Marwan in 128 A.H. His father Imam Sadiq (‘a) was the one who trained him and took care of his affairs, showering his learning on him copiously. After his father's death Imam Musa (‘a) became the greatest authority in the Islamic world, with scholars and transmitters of hadith converging on him to partake of his fountainhead of knowledge.

Imam Musa al-Kazim was among the bitterest critics of the policies of Harun al-Rashid, the salient part of which consisted of sport, wine and other vices that God has prohibited. This despot arrested the Imam (‘a) and imprisoned him in his dungeons where he spent the prime of his life moving from one prison to another. Finally, Rashid ordered his chief of police a Magian called al-Sindi bin Shahik to poison him. It was not long after the Imam took the poison before his pure soul ascended towards God, surrounded by angels of mercy. His martyrdom took place on the 25th of Rajab, 183 A.H.

To humiliate his holy remains, the authorities ordered their soldiers to put it on the bridge [in Baghdad] and utter horrible shouts at it, which indicated the hatred and malice Rashid harboured against the Household of the Prophet (s). Seeing this, a notable man of the Abbasid family, Sulayman, took away the Imam's (‘a) body from the soldiers, conducted a big funeral procession and buried it in the tomb that is now a famous visiting place in Islam.

8. Imam Rida (‘a)

Imam Rida was a torch of the light of God and a treasure of His wisdom. He was the greatest Islamic personality of his time. Because of his preeminence and distinction among the noblemen of the Prophet's Household (‘a), the Abbasid caliph Ma'mun nominated him as heir apparent although it was a ploy. Imam Rida (‘a) was aware of Mamun's intentions but to safeguard the common good he had to accept

the appointment. Earlier Mamun had invited scholars from different kingdoms of the world in order to test the Imam and show his incapacity. However, when they came they could not compete with him and some even acknowledged that he was the Imam (‘a) and God's proof on mankind.

Imam Rida (‘a) was born in 148 A.H. and grew up under the care of his father, the master of the devout, Imam Kazim (‘a) who lit him with the light of his soul, fed him with his lofty ideals and spiritual constituents till he became like his father.

The story of Imam Rida's (‘a) asceticism, piety and knowledge spread all over the Islamic provinces and this caused Mamun to hate him and because of this, he made him take poisoned grapes that caused his death. Imam Rida's (‘a) martyrdom occurred on the 18th of Safar, 203 A.H.

9. Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (‘a)

One of the leaders of learning and thought in Islam, Imam Jawad (‘a) was born in the year 195 A.H. and he assumed the office of the Imamate after his father's demise when he was only nine years old. Mamun thought that the Imam's (‘a) tender age presented an opportunity for him to refute the Shi'ite belief that their Imams were matchless in their learning. Therefore, he called intellectual conferences to test Imam Jawad's (‘a) ability, whether he would fail to give answers. He was asked the most difficult questions but he answered them like an erudite scholar. The people asked Imam Jawad (‘a) more than 20,000 questions at various times and he answered them all, so that his immense knowledge at that age became the talk of the people in their assemblies. This caused the Abbasids to hate him.

Mutasim the Abbasid caliph assassinated Imam Jawad (‘a) by ordering his wife Umm al-Fadl to poison him. His martyrdom happened on Tuesday the 5th of Dhu al-Hijjah, 220 A.H.[1]

1- Hayat al-Imam al-Jawad (‘a), p. 277.

10. Imam Ali al-Hadi (‘a)

He was born in the year 212 A.H. His father gave him the name Ali and the agnomen Abu al-Hasan after his ancestor the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), seeking blessings by that. al-Hadi (‘a) took after him the attitude of self-abnegation and total disregard for the matters of this fleeting world. He fully devoted his life to God.

Imam al-Hadi (‘a) was among the most prominent Alid noblemen of his time who were at the forefront of opposition to Abbasid rule, which was based on injustice and tyranny. Mutawakkil summoned him to Samarra and forced him to stay there, and disallowed the scholars and the Shi'ah from communicating with him. Mutawakkil arrested and released al-Hadi several times.

In 254 A.H. the Abbasid caliph Mu'tamid poisoned al-Hadi (‘a), his martyrdom being on the 25th of Jumada al-Akhirah of that year, according to some sources.

11. Imam Hasan al-Askari (‘a)

He was the eleventh in the sequence of the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) who had borne the divine message and prepared themselves to face the trials and tribulations that were caused by the rulers of their times, so that the truth may be supreme, and also to defend the rights of the oppressed and the persecuted.

He was born in Medina (some accounts say in Samarra) in 230 A.H., according to some reports. He lived with his father al-Hadi and the forced stay in Samarra that had been imposed on the former affected him as well. He was arrested several times together with his father and also alone, because he would not comply with the unjust Abbasid policy or support their repressive actions.

Al-Askari (‘a) died of poison in 260 A.H. and was buried near his father's tomb in Samarra.

12. Imam al-Mahdi (‘a)

He is the great reformer who will straighten up the distortions that have affected the order of religion and fill the world with justice and equity after it has been filled with injustice and tyranny. The Apostle of God (s) has given the news of his appearance in many ahadith, whose

frequency has reached continuous verbal recurrence (*al-tawatur al-lafzi*) and continuous recurrence by import (*al-tawatur al-ma'nawi*). All the immaculate Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) have also informed of the return of al-Mahdi (‘a) and this matter is a part of the Islamic message, so that its denial is tantamount to a denial of Islam itself.

Imam Mahdi (‘a) was born in Samarra in 256 A.H. God concealed his birth just as He had concealed the birth of His prophet Moses (‘a), son of Imran. This was to save him from the intrigues of arrogant Abbasid rulers who believed that he was the one to destroy their dominion. They had mounted surveillance and sent both men and women spies to look for information about his birth.

Imam Mahdi (‘a) took up the office of the Imamate at the age of five. Some of his father's best companions had seen him before he went into his minor occultation, which lasted for about 70 years, during which four deputies acted as intermediaries between him and the Shi'ah. Thereafter, he went into the major occultation for which he commissioned the God-fearing and ascetic jurists to act as his representatives, and enjoined the Shi'ah to accept their authority. I have discussed this issue in detail in my book *Hayat al-Imam al-Mahdi (‘a)*.

BASE ACCUSATIONS

The Shi'ah have been charged with mean accusations that are devoid of all objectivity and cannot stand the test of intellectual standards. In fact, such accusations are engendered by ignorance, hatred and the mindset of a bigot who has missed the right way. Below we shall point to a few of them.

Prostrating on the 'earth of Imam Husayn'

The delusion and hatred of some ignorant fellows has reached a stage that they even circulate it that the Shi'ah worship the earth from the tomb of Imam Husayn (‘a) by prostrating before it. What a brazen calumny whose fabricators deserve God's wrath! It is necessary to dwell on this issue in detail.

Prostrating on soil

Many ahadith reported from the Noble Prophet (s) and his outstanding companions indicate the necessity of prostrating on soil, and that it has been made a place of prostration and a purifier. Here are some of them:

A- The Prophet (s) said, 'The earth has been made wholesome and a place of prostration (or a mosque) for me, so when is time for prayer one should pray wherever one might be.'[1]

B- The Prophet (s) said to Abu Dharr, 'The earth is a mosque for you, so pray wherever you may be when the time for prayer sets in.'[2]

C- Bin Abbas relates that the Prophet (s) has prostrated on stone.[3]

1- Sahih al-Bukhari, 1:86; Sahih Muslim, 2:64; Sahih al-Nasa'i, 2:32; Sahih Abu Dawud, 1:79 Sahih Tirmidhi, 2:114; al-Sunan al-Kubra, 2:32.
2- Sahih al-Nasa'i, 2:37.
3- Hakim's al-Mustadrak, 3:473.

D- Abu Sa'id al-Khudri is related to have said, 'I have seen with my own eyes the trace of water and mud on the nose and forehead of the Prophet (s).'[1]

E- It is reported that Anas bin Malik has said, 'We were praying with the Apostle of God (s) in the peak of heat, and one would take a pebble in his hand and when it cooled one would put it down and prostrate on it.'[2]

F- Jabir bin Abdillah al-Ansari is reported to have said, 'We used to pray with the Apostle of God (s) and I would take a handful of pebbles and put them in my other hand until they cooled down, then I would prostrate on them, out of excessive heat.'[3]

Similar ahadith have been received from the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt ('a)*, which consider it necessary in prayer, to prostrate oneself on the earth or what grows on it.

The significance of Prostration

Prayer is the most important rite of religion in the eyes of God. It is the 'a believer's heavenly ascension (*mi'raj*)', the 'the offering of every pious one' and the mark that distinguishes a Muslim from a non-Muslim, as we find in the narrations. God the Exalted has made prayer the distinction of humans over the rest of His creatures and honoured them with the act of standing before Him and in proximity to Him.

The best part of prayer is prostration because it is the highest form of servitude to God. He expelled Satan from paradise after he refused to prostrate before Adam because of egotism and arrogance: Satan believed that he was superior to Adam since he was created from heat energy, which was better than clay, from which Adam was created. Here, Satan had employed analogical deduction, and it is stated in the narrations, as a mark of disapproval, that the first person to employ analogical deduction was Satan.

1- Sahih al-Bukhari, 1:163; Sahih Abu Dawud, 1:143; al-Sunan al-Kubra, 2:104.
2- Al-Sunan al-Kubra, 2:106.
3- Musnad Ahmad, 1:327.

To prostrate oneself before God, with the intention of expressing humility before Him and glorifying Him, is among the greatest forms of worship. There is nothing as detestable to Satan as the sight of the children of Adam prostrating themselves before God the Exalted because he had been commanded to it but he disobey ed and ruined himself, but the children, Adam have obeyed what they have been commanded and saved. Here it is pertinent to note that it is forbidden to prostrate before anyone other than God, and the angels' prostration before Adam was in fact prostration before God, Adam only being their direction (*qiblah*). Similarly, the prostration of Jacob and his sons before Joseph (‘a) was not for his sake but as a thanksgiving to God for the kingdom He had bestowed on him.[1]

Because of the significance of prostration, it is stipulated that the place where it is to be performed or its usufruct, must not be usurped, otherwise the prostration will be invalid. In addition, the place should be ritually pure (*tahir*) and it must be the earth or that which grows on it, apart from what is used for human consumption or for clothing.

It is reprehensible to prostrate in the bathhouse; refuse dump; slaughter house; resting places of camels; horse stable; mule, donkey, cow, sheep and goat sheds; roads; and other places which the jurists mentioned. This caution is meant to preserve the sanctified nature of prostration.

In any case, it is preferable for the worshipper to take a pure piece of earth for his prostration, from wherever it may be, because he may not easily get a place whose purity and permissibility he can be sure of, especially on journeys when one stays in places like hotels and mixes with people who attach no importance to religion. It has been reported that the prominent jurist Masruq bin al-Ajda'[2] used to take a brick to prostrate on whenever he traveled, for the same reasons we mentioned.

1- Al-Urwat al-Wuthqa, 1:316.

2- Masruq bin al-Hamadani (d.62 A.H.) was a tabi'i (of the generation that followed that of the Companions of the Prophet -s-). He was among the authorities of the Sihah collections of hadith. He related from Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali (s). He was a jurist among the disciples of bin Mas'ud who used to teach the people the Sunnah. His biography is found in al-Bukhari's al-Tarikh 2:35; bin Sa'd's al-Tabaqat, 6:50; Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, 10:109; al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil, 1:396.

This is the Shi'ite view on the necessity of prostrating on any type of soil, and we do not know in what way it contradicts God's law or constitutes a breach of the religious order.

The earth of Imam Husayn

The Shi'ah are in the habit of prostrating on the soil that is taken from near the tomb of Imam Husayn (‘a). They make tablets of that soil and keep them in mosques, homes, and other places of worship, and carry them wherever they go. This custom derives from the holiness which they attach to this earth because it has been taken from the land of Karbala, which is fortunate to have in it, the body of the beloved grandson of God's Apostle (s), Imam Husayn (‘a), the lord of the youth of paradise, about whom the Apostle (s) has said, 'Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn'. It was on that holy plain that his blood and that of his family and companions was spilled, as they fought to make the word of Islam supreme, and ward off the danger of the Age of Ignorance that loomed over the Muslims during the rule of Yazid bin Muawiya. With rare impudence Yazid had openly declared: 'No news came from above and no revelation has descended,' upon which the Apostle's grandson challenged him with an uprising, the consequence of which sent Yazid's dominion to its knees and brought him out of his palace into his grave. The pure blood that was spilled in Karbala lit the path of freedom and honour, set the Umayyad palaces on fire and finally swept away their thrones.

Thus, the land of Karbala like that of Mecca and Medina has earned greatness and holiness. The narrators of hadith relate that when the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) passed through the land of Karbala he took a handful of its soil, smelled it and wept so much that his tears moistened the soil, then he said, 'From this land 70,000 people will be raised (on the Day of Resurrection) and they will enter paradise without being called to account' [1]

Umm Salamah the wife of the Prophet (s) has said, 'One night the Apostle of God (s) lay down to sleep in an agitated mood. Then he lay down a second time less agitated than the first. Then he lay down again kissing some red soil in his hand, upon which I asked him, 'What soil

1- Majma' al-Zawa'id, 9:191.

is this, O Apostle of God?' He said: 'Gabriel has informed me that he - and he pointed to Husayn- will be killed in Iraq, so I asked him to show me the earth on which he will be killed. This is his earth. '[1]

Umm al-Fadl bint al-Harith relates, 'Husayn was in my lap when I went into the presence of the Apostle of God (s). Then accidentally, I turned around and saw his eyes shedding tears, so I said to him, 'O Prophet of God, may my father and mother be your ransom. What is wrong?' 'Gabriel came and told me that my community will kill this son of mine,' he replied. Umm al-Fadl became very terrified and said, pointing to Husayn, 'Will this one be killed?' 'Yes', replied the Prophet (s), 'Gabriel has brought me some of [the] red earth [of the place where he will be killed].'

A'isha said: 'Husayn bin Ali went in to the Apostle of God (s) while revelation was descending on him, and leaped on him as he was preoccupied with the revelation. Gabriel said, 'Do you love him, O Muhammad?' Why won't I love my son?' he replied. Gabriel said: 'Your community will kill him after you,' and he stretched out his hand and brought him some white soil, and said, 'In this soil this son of yours will be killed. Its name is al-Taff.' When Gabriel left the Apostle of God (s) the soil was in his hand as he wept and said to me, 'O A'isha! Gabriel told me that my son Husayn will be killed in the land of al-Taff and my community will be seduced after me.' Then as he wept he went out to his companions, among whom were Abu Bakr, Umar, Hudhayfah, Ammar and Abu Dharr. They quickly came up to him, asking, 'What is the matter with you, O Apostle of God?' 'Gabriel informed me,' he replied, 'that my son Husayn will be killed after me in the land of al-Taff. He brought me this soil and told me that that is where he will be laid to rest.'[2]

Umm Salamah relates that 'Hasan and Husayn were playing in front of the Prophet (s) in my house when Gabriel descended and said, 'O Muhammad! Your community will kill this son of yours after you', and he pointed to Husayn. Then God's Apostle (s) wept and embraced

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1- Hakim's al-Mustadrak, 4: 398; Kanz al-Ummal, 7: 106; Siyar A'lam al-Nubala', 3: 15; Dhakha'ir al-Uqba', p.148.

2- Majma' al-Zaw'id, 9:187; Tahdhib al-Kamal, p. 7, where it is stated that the Prophet (s) held the soil that Gabriel brought smelling it and saying 'O grief and affliction!'

Husayn. There was some soil in his hand which he went on smelling and saying 'O grief and affliction!' Then he handed it to me and said, 'When this soil turns into blood you should know that my son has been killed.' Umm Salamah placed the soil in a bottle and checked it every day, saying: 'Certainly, the day you will change into blood will be a terrible one.'[1]

There are many similar ahadith that are reported by reliable Sunni narrators, in which the Prophet (s) venerated the blessed spot where his grandson Imam Husayn (‘a) would be martyred. Therefore, what is the fault of the Shi'ah in taking the soil from that place to prostrate on it before God alone?

Abu Hanifah's teacher al-Awza'i used to carry the soil of Medina to prostrate on whenever he traveled outside the city. When he was asked about that he said, 'The best place on earth is that on which the Apostle of God (s) is buried, and I like my prostrations before God to be on this soil.

Indeed their opponents have reproached the Shi'ah for prostrating themselves on the earth of Husayn and labeled against them accusations that cannot stand the scrutiny of knowledge and reason. Had there been a single argument that has the weight of legal proof, which shows that it is not permissible to prostrate on it, the Shi'ah would have stopped it right away.

Commemoration of Imam Husayn (‘a)

The opponents of the Shi'ah criticize them for conducting mourning ceremonies for Imam Husayn (‘a). This tradition is among the most important gain of his uprising and a great source of pride for the Shi'ah, because it constitutes a school for refining the morals and a means of cautioning the people not to fall into vices and crimes. This is function of the sermons and admonitions that are delivered from the pulpits on such occasions, when the speakers recount the calamities that befell the father of freemen, Imam Husayn (‘a), and remain as fine lessons of sacrifice for the sake of truth and justice. The German author, Martin,

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1- Al-Tabarani's al-Mu'jam al-Kabir chapter of the biography of Imam Husayn (s).

said that these sermons could be a very important means of Muslim progress if they are organized and utilized correctly.[1]

The commemoration ceremonies are an invitation to charity and kindness, and emulating the manners of the righteous, and this explains why the Shi'ah surpass other Muslims in kindness and charity.

It is noteworthy that the first ceremony to mourn the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a) was conducted immediately after he was born, and this was by the Apostle (s) himself. Asma' bint Umays said, 'When Husayn was delivered the Prophet (s) came to me and said, 'O Asma' bring me my son', so I handed him the baby in a white cloth. He recited the adhan in his right ear and the iqamah in his left. Then he placed him on his lap and wept. I said to him, 'May my father and mother be your ransom, why do you weep?' 'For this son of mine', he replied. Asma' became breathless and said, 'But, he is just born.' The Apostle (s) replied, 'O Asma' the unjust party will kill him. May God never grant them my intercession!'

Indeed, the Prophet (s) had penetrated the veil of the unseen and discerned the tragedies that were in store for his newborn. He visualized the horrors of al-Taff, which could melt mountains and the like of which no social reformer on earth has had to suffer. This was why he gave way to agony and tears.

Pilgrimage to the Tombs of the Imams (‘a)

Another issue for which the Shi'ah are criticized is visiting the graves of their Imams (‘a). In the line of bin Taymiyya, al-Qasimi writes, 'The excess (*ghulu*) concerning their Imams which I witness from the Shi'ah sect and how I heard them defying Ali and his children, shows that they worship the graves and the people buried there. They build the mausoleums and visit them from far and wide. They bring votive offerings, donations and sacrifices. They pour blood and tears on them and observe complete humility and meekness before them, perform that in all sincerity to them, but not to God the Lord of the monotheists.'[2] This criticism is as banal as its author is mediocre; his soul has been stuffed with ignorance, bigotry and hostility toward the

1- Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn (‘a), 3:448.
2- Al-Sira', 1:54.

Household of the Prophet (s), whose members are the ships of deliverance for mankind.

Visiting the esteemed mausoleums of the Imams (‘a) is a veneration of the sacraments of God (*sha'a'ir Allah*) and an acknowledgement of the great services the Imams (‘a) have rendered to Islam, therefore, visiting their tombs is in fact a celebration of some higher principles as well as those invaluable services. There is also immense benefit for the pilgrims, as those visits make them gain proximity to God and induce them to follow the example of the immaculate Imams (‘a), which was a breeze from God's mercy. Another benefit is that they serve as gathering places where Muslims meet and strengthen the ties of brotherhood just like the pilgrimage to the House of God, one of the aims of which is to serve this very function.

In any case, it is an established fact that visiting the graves of the Imams (‘a) is lawful, as this report of A'isha's indicates. She said that the Prophet (s) 'used to go to [the cemetery of] al-Baqi' and say, 'Peace be on you [the people of] the house of believers. What you have been promised in deferment for the next world has come to you, and we shall join you, God willing. O God forgive the inmates of al-Baqi' al-Gharqad.'[1] The mistress of all women, Fatima Zahra (‘a) used to visit the grave of her father's uncle Hamza every Friday and weep there.[2] After the demise of her father the seal of the prophets (s), she used to go to his tomb, take a handful of soil and smell it. Then she would weep most bitterly and recite this poem with grief-stricken intonation,

'What fault is there in one who smells the soil of Ahmad, if he smells not all the soils for ever?

Such calamities have afflicted me, had they afflicted the days they would have turned into nights.

Say to the one hidden under the layer of earth, if you are hearing my wails and my calls.

I was protected under the shelter of Muhammad, not apprehensive of injustice, my affairs magnificent.

1- Sunan al-Bayhaqi, 4:194; al-Mughni, 1:357; Sahih Muslim.

2- Hakim's al-Mustadrak, 1:377. The author commented that all the transmitters of this narration were reliable.

Today, I defer to the lowly and am wary of harm; with my cloak, I parry the blow of my attacker.

The pigeon coos at night out of grief, perched on a twig, while I weep in the mornings.

I will surely make grief my company after you, I will reserve the tears and grief for you.[1]

Also the lord of the youth of paradise Imam Husayn (‘a) used to visit the graves of the martyrs at al-Baqi.' He used to recite,

'I called the inmates of the graves but they were silent, the earth of their remains explained their silence.

It said: Do you know what I did to my dwellers? I tore their flesh and shredded their shrouds.

And filled with earth, their eyes which were before irritated by mere specks

As for the bones, I broke them till the joints parted and their limbs separated

I severed this from that, and left them in eternal decay.[2]

In his encyclopeadic work al-*Ghadir*, Allama al-Amini (may God illuminate his tomb) has discussed, in an objective and comprehensive manner, the question of the lawfulness of visiting graves, leaving no aorta of doubt as to this issue. The author has cited the ahadith reported by various Muslim scholars to the effect that visiting graves was lawful or even recommended, adding that it is a custom that has been upheld by Muslims from the dawn of their history until this time.

Kissing the graves

The silliest criticism against the Shi'ah is that about kissing the graves of the Imams (‘a); some ignoramuses even associate it with disbelief and apostasy. This criticism bespeaks of the intellectual tardiness of those who make it, for kissing the golden or silver surfaces of the latticework that covers their graves, is only done as a tribute to those

1- Bin Shahrashub's al-Manaqib, 2:231.
2- Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah.

whose pure remains are housed there, those people who bore the Islamic message and strove the hardest to make the word of God supreme. It is similar to kissing the cover of the holy Qur'an which contains the word of God the Great, with no difference whatsoever. And I do not think anybody will consider kissing the cover of the holy book a form of infidelity.

Whichever way it viewed, by kissing the tombs of their Imams (‘a), the Shi'ah venerate those sacred beings and acknowledge their high position in God's eyes. In fact to do this is to venerate the sacraments of God the Exalted:

﴿ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعَظِّمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ﴾

"And whoever venerates the sacraments of God, indeed that arises only from the God-wariness of hearts."[1]

1- *Surah al-Haj, 22:32.*

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